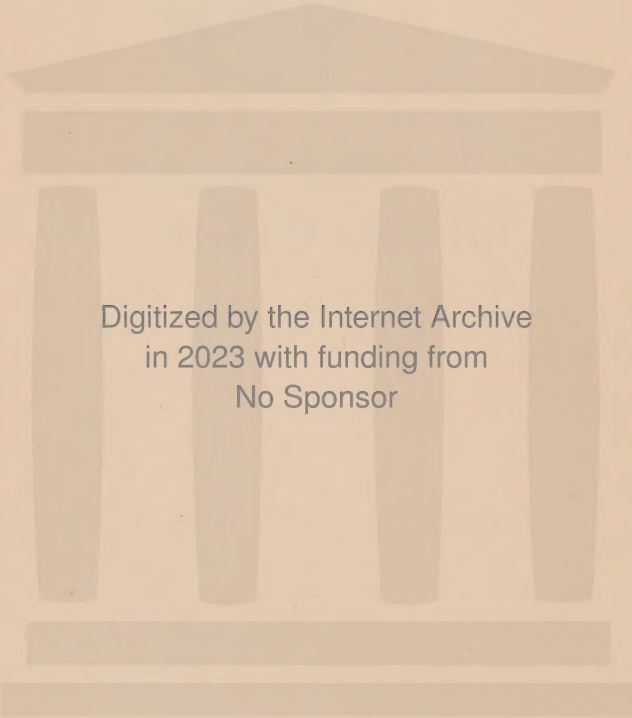


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HEINRICH HEINE



HEINRICH HEINE, 1831

Painting by Moritz Oppenheim

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HEINRICH HEINE

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF
THE POET AND HIS WORKS

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PREFACE

NO excuse need be offered for publishing this work on one of the few German poets who have attained to world fame and on whom there is a great scarcity of critical works in English. Since, many years ago, Sharp and Stigand wrote their now rather obsolete biographies the field lay fallow until the appearance last year of Professor Atkins' Heine.

What I have attempted to write, with the help of a great deal of the material now at the disposal of the student of Heine, is a critical examination of the life and works of the poet considered purely as a German poet. The question of racial influences, the obsession of a number of German Heine biographers, naturally obtruded itself from time to time in the course of my studies, but was, after careful examination, dismissed as furnishing data too elusive to be of practical use. The environmental influences, on the other hand, have received due consideration.

I have translated the prose passages quoted, but have left the verse in the original. Translating verse out of one language into another is always a desperate undertaking, and in the case of Heine's lyrics it is almost futile. As one of the most skilful and successful of Heine translators, Louis Untermeyer, puts it in the preface to his translation of a selection of Heine's poems: "I repeat, recognizing the great difference in tonal values of the two languages, that this English translation is little more than 'the book of the opera,' that Heine's music can only be heard in the original German."

I wish to express my grateful acknowledgment of the help and inspiration I have received from the work of my predecessors in this field. The literature perused is

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so vast that it was impossible to make acknowledgment of the source of every individual detail borrowed from others.

My thanks are also due to Dr Reuter, Director of the State Library of Düsseldorf and Curator of the Heine Archives, to Professor Barker Fairley of Toronto University, and to Professor Latham and Miss Bertha Meyer of M'Gill University for much help in the way of suggestions and criticism.

H. W.

MONTREAL, 1930

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DÜSSELDORF, ABOUT 1880
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THE PORTRAITS

IT is no easy task to make a selection from among the thirty-odd Heine portraits which compete for the distinction of being the most faithful likeness of the poet. Even after eliminating some that are more or less obviously copies of the work of other artists, we are still left with an embarrassing multitude of Heine portraits, the amazing dissimilarities of which are very disconcerting. We have selected the portraits which seemed to present the best credentials in the shape of the approval of those who knew Heine most intimately : the paintings by Oppenheim (frontispiece) and Giere, and the drawings by an Unknown Artist, by Kugler, and the two drawings by Kietz. We have not had the heart to omit Grimm's drawing, one of the most popular of Heine portraits, though it presents really a fantastic embellishment of the features of the original. If Heine approved of it, it was mainly because it tickled his vanity, since it made him look like Byron and Goethe combined. The origin of the two portraits by Kietz is interesting. Kietz in 1851 had made a portrait of the bed-ridden, paralysed poet, and had portrayed him in what was then the poet's normal condition : with his eyes closed. Heine's wife indignantly protested, as it made her husband appear to be blind, and to conciliate her the artist immediately made another drawing, eyes open this time. It was now Heine's turn to protest against what he declared to be a lie. While, according to Dr Reuter of the Düsseldorf State Library, there is no absolute proof that the second drawing is the one referred to by Meissner, who tells the story, the presumption in its favour amounts almost to certainty.

As to the death mask, the profile will be new to most

readers, and the full face, though more generally known, has been taken at an angle which makes it look more like the head of a bust portraying the living original than a death mask with all its unpleasant associations.

Of Amalie Heine only the bust is given. We have omitted a portrait painted in 1830 which represents her as a fat though comely Hausfrau, no longer imaginable as the heroine of the *Buch der Lieder*. The features of Heine's last love, La Mouche, we prefer to leave entirely to the imagination of the reader, aided by the descriptions given by Meissner and others. The only portrait in existence shows an unattractive woman of middle age bereft of every charm which had once enthralled the dying poet.

I

DÜSSELDORF

THE chapter dealing with a man's earliest years often presents peculiar difficulties to the biographer. By the time the hero has attained to fame, and the facts of his early life have assumed sufficient importance to be remembered and handed down to posterity, thirty or forty years may have elapsed, and where no diaries have been kept, more or less treacherous memories become the only source of information. This is often unsatisfactory even where there is no desire or motive to conceal or invent, and where an honest attempt is made to remember incidents which at the time of happening seemed so trivial as to make hardly any impression. In the case of Heine our difficulties are enormously increased. What Heine himself supplies regarding his earliest youth is too often entirely mythical or considerably embellished, for Heine writes not as an historian, but as a poet, more concerned with artistic effect than with accuracy of information. His creative impulse is never idle, and if the actual facts he is dealing with are not significant enough, he makes them so. This is the poet's undoubted right. The accounts given by Heine's relatives, on the other hand, are often disfigured by misstatements and deliberate suppressions of facts. These relatives all became rich or attained to prominent social positions; they were climbers, and found that the adoption of Christianity made the ascent more pleasant. Therefore they were anxious to let the world forget all about the Jewish origin of the family. In their accounts they modestly veiled the humble figure of their paternal ancestor, the little Bückeburg Jew, who wore a long beard and dealt in all kinds of junk, and they even made

an attempt to represent the forebears of Heine's mother, the "von" Gelderns, as of true Nordic and Christian stock. The worst offender was Heine's brother, Maximilian, who destroyed the first twenty sheets of Heine's memoirs dealing with the poet's early Jewish surroundings, and besides committed numerous impudent forgeries in editing some of Heine's letters.¹ Thus the doubtfulness of the uncorroborated testimony given by the family, combined with Heine's poetic handling of the facts, imposes on the biographer the duty of extreme caution and renders his story of the poet's youth somewhat less picturesque than it might have been.

Harry, or as in later years he called himself, Heinrich Heine, was born on December 13, 1797.² This is nowadays the date generally accepted. His father, Samson Heine, came to Düsseldorf from Hanover, and was a cloth merchant. As the Jewish congregation entrusted him with the responsible functions of *Armenpfleger*, or guardian of the poor, we may assume that he was a Jew in good standing with the synagogue, and at least outwardly orthodox. He was inordinately vain (most of

¹ F. Hirth, *H. Heines Briefwechsel*, Bd. 1, pp. 34-36. E. Elster, *Beiträge zu Heines Biographie*, *Deutsche Rundschau*, Juli 1897.

² As the civil register of Düsseldorf was destroyed by fire at the beginning of the nineteenth century, there exists no official proof of any kind with regard to the date. There being thus an open field, no fewer than six dates compete for the honour of being the right date. Two of them: December 13, 1779, and December 31, 1799, the former in the *Curriculum Vitæ* submitted to the University of Göttingen, the latter in Heine's marriage certificate, are mere slips made by Heine himself, which, nevertheless, does not increase our confidence in his accuracy. February 1798 was given by Rabbi Scheuer when after the Düsseldorf fire he was asked to draw up from memory a list of the Jewish children born in Düsseldorf between 1797 and 1815. The year 1800, suggested by Heine's niece, Maria Embden-Heine, is merely a reminiscence of Heine's joke in *Die Bäder von Lucca*, that he was born in the New Year's night of 1800 and was thus one of the first men of the century. That December 13, 1799, though favoured by Heine and his relatives, is not the right date must be apparent to any intelligent reader of Heine's letter of July 16, 1853. All the evidence clearly set forth by Hüffer (*Aufsätze über Heine*) and K. E. Franzos (*Heines Geburtstag*) points to December 13, 1797, as the right date. The change from 1797 to 1799 was made by Heine's parents to enable their son in 1816, when he wished to emigrate to Hamburg, to apply for the indispensable release from military service. This application had to be made before the applicant had completed his seventeenth year. In any case we shall probably agree with Heine's sentiment, expressed in a letter to St René Taillandier: "L'important c'est que je suis né."

the Heines were that), very shallow, an amiable and harmless child, incapable of influencing his family for good or evil. A recent biographer refers to the poor man as a "bornirter Geist," "hirnloser Bonvivant," and speaks with some show of indignation of his "blöde Dummheit." As a matter of fact Samson Heine was probably no more stupid than the average man, and the most serious charge than can be laid against him is that he committed the imprudence of becoming the father of Heinrich Heine, thereby inevitably inviting invidious comparisons. As Heine calls his father "the man he loved most in the world," and was, after his father's death, for a time perfectly inconsolable, we may safely assume that Samson Heine had some qualities that endeared him at least to his family, if not to his son's biographers.

The mother's maiden name was Peierche, later Betty, van Geldern. The "van" was changed to "von" by the Heine family; it is, of course, not the particle of nobility, but simply means that her family had migrated from Geldern. According to Heine's account she was a woman of unusual culture, a disciple of Rousseau and Goethe, perfectly familiar with French and English, and knowing Latin so thoroughly that she was able to read Latin dissertations to her father, a physician, and to astonish him by the cleverness of her questions. That the German of her letters is very defective is not to be set down against her, as the German of many distinguished and cultured women of her time was no better, but that none of the many persons who visited the mother of a famous son should ever breathe a word of her extraordinary culture or be impressed by her knowledge seems to justify the view that Heine's picture of her is strongly idealized. There is, however, no doubt that in point of character and culture she was superior to her husband, a devoted and affectionate mother, one of the very few persons of whom Heine always spoke with gratitude and affection. The remainder of the family consisted of a sister, Charlotte, a few years younger than Heine, the

only one that can be said to have played any part in his younger years, and two brothers, Maximilian and Gustav.

The condition of the Jews in Düsseldorf was, even before the time of the French régime, far more tolerable than in a great many parts of Germany. There was no *Judengasse*, and the four hundred Jews living there enjoyed a measure of liberty which must have been the envy of the Ghetto Jews of Frankfurt. All the schools were open to them, educated Jews enjoyed a good deal of liberty in the choice of a profession and were not, as in other places, confined to peddling and money-lending. If something like an anti-Semitic reaction set in about the beginning of the century it was of short duration, only just long enough to make the Jews hail Napoleon as a deliverer who brought them an equality they never even dreamed of before. So perfectly was the principle of civil and religious equality recognized by Napoleon that when on the occasion of his visit to Düsseldorf in 1811 he received a delegation representing the three religions, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish, it was the Rabbi who acted as spokesman. Orthodox Judaism, however, could hardly be said to have gained by the change of régime, and the drawbacks soon became apparent. The new liberty, with its unrestricted opportunities to acquire profane knowledge and to come in contact with the ruling race, held out a strong temptation to break away entirely from the narrow rabbinical educational ideal, and resulted inevitably in weakening the power of Judaism in spite of continued outward observances.

This happened in the Heine family where the spirit of Judaism was really stone dead though the ceremonial law was strictly observed. As they grew up the children could not fail to notice the meaninglessness and lifelessness of the parental religion, and, in a non-Jewish environment, were bound to turn their backs on Judaism sooner or later. When Heine, towards the end of his life, returned, as he tells us, to the religion of his youth, he certainly had not far to go. There is a quaint passage in *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutsch-*



BETTY HEINE

Oil Painting in the Picture Gallery, Düsseldorf

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land which may be quoted here. It shows the child's imagination at work, puzzling out in its own materialistic way the problem of the universe as a purely intellectual problem

“God was always the beginning and the end of all my thoughts. If now I ask: what is God? what His nature? even as a small child I already asked: what is God like? what does He look like? And at that time I could spend whole days looking up at the sky, and in the evening I was quite disconsolate, that I had never glimpsed the most holy countenance of God, but had only seen the silly grimaces of the grey clouds. I grew entirely confused by all the information learned from astronomy, which subject even the smallest child was not spared in that period of enlightenment. I could not get over the wonder of it, that all these thousands of millions of stars were great and beautiful globes, like our own, and that one simple God ruled over all these gleaming myriads of worlds. Once in a dream, I remember, I saw God, in the farthest distance of the high heavens. He was gazing contentedly out of a little window of heaven, a pious old face with a little Jewish beard; He was scattering handfuls of seeds, which as they fell from heaven opened out, as it were, in the immeasurable space, and grew to tremendous size, until they finally became bright, flourishing, inhabited worlds, each one as large as our own. I have never been able to forget this face; I often saw this cheerful old man in my dreams again, scattering the seeds of worlds out of His tiny window: I once even saw Him cluck with his lips, just as our maid used to do when she gave the hens their barley. I could only see the falling seeds, always expanding to vast shining globes: but the great hens, which were possibly lying in wait somewhere with wide-open beaks, to be fed with these world-spheres, those I could never see.”¹

Young Heine's education was begun in a preparatory school and a Jewish private school, which he attended until he was old enough to receive his instruction at the Lyceum. Here the curriculum and the discipline were French, special stress being laid on French language and literature and Latin. The fact that most of the teachers were Catholic priests did not in the least interfere with the thoroughly rationalistic atmosphere of the institution. Indeed Schallmeyer, the rector, himself a priest,

¹ Elster, *Heines Werke*, IV. 257.

who read mass with due unction, took special delight in propounding to the oldest pupils all the materialistic and atheistic systems of ancient and modern times. Though Heine's claim that he was, as a particularly bright boy, privileged to listen to these lectures when he was only thirteen, is probably unfounded,¹ still, whenever he did hear them, they can only have helped to unsettle him still further and to make the task of building up his character without the help of traditions of any kind peculiarly difficult. The whole of this education appealed not to the heart, but to the understanding only, and had little ethical value. A French education imposed on German boys could hardly have any other effect as long as the boys continued to speak German outside the classroom and to think in German. It was doubly regrettable, as in several important cultural aspects the Germans were at that time many years ahead of the French. While in philosophy the French were still languishing on the starvation diet of their purely negative philosophical systems, the Germans could boast of giants of thought like Kant and Fichte. In literature Goethe was still living and Schiller belonged to the immediate past, while the romantic movement was already opening up new literary vistas. Contemporary French literature on the other hand was anæmic and devoid of interest, the old classical traditions of the seventeenth century had been done to death by the successors of the great writers of that epoch, and the era of the romantic revival had hardly set in when Heine was at school.

Apart from these serious fundamental defects the curriculum was fairly sound according to the ideas of the time, though the results of the schooling Heine received there were probably modest enough. The family, as might be expected, gives us a glowing account of Heine, the young scholastic prodigy, and Heine himself assures us that Schallmeyer, the rector, was so deeply

¹ I. Asbach, *Das Düsseldorfer Lyceum unter bayerischer und französischer Herrschaft*, Düsseldorf, 1900.

impressed that he advised the mother to make a priest of him and send him to Rome, holding out dazzling visions of bishoprics, cardinals' hats, and even papal tiaras. Asbach and others have, however, shown with the help of the Düsseldorf school records that young Heine was by no means among the most distinguished pupils of his year inasmuch as the lavishly distributed book prizes and "honourable mentions" seemed invariably to elude his grasp. Several years after leaving school Heine presented himself for the matriculation examination at Bonn, a mercifully perfunctory test, as many of the candidates were young men who had fought against Napoleon. He really passed in German and history only, and the examination in Latin and mathematics had to be omitted. He was obviously weak in the fundamental disciplinary subjects of the curriculum. As we hear nothing of any impression made on him either at school or at home by the great writers of German literature, Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller, which is all the more surprising as Goethe, according to Heine, was his mother's favourite poet, we may with some justification conclude that the net result of his school years was a habit of ogling with atheistic systems of philosophy and an undying hatred of French verse. Nor did his character undergo any marked process of evolution. Indeed something of the ways of the schoolboy stuck to Heine all his life, the absolute want of reverence, the readiness to hit out on the slightest provocation, and a certain wanton cruelty in the treatment of his adversaries. It is also noteworthy that although he wrote verse at a pretty early age, the conviction that he was a poet, or might become one, seems to have dawned neither upon him nor upon anyone in his immediate surroundings while he was in Düsseldorf. Were it not for a first emotional experience he passed through while he was still at school, the years he spent in his native town would have been of no importance whatever.

In the neighbourhood of Düsseldorf there lived an old woman called the *Göchin*, who enjoyed the reputation

of being a witch. With her lived "red Sefchen," her niece, the daughter of the executioner. Both the place and its denizens were taboo to all citizens who had a reputation to lose or a soul to save. Sefchen was remarkably beautiful, tall and slender, with perfectly cut features, a skin of unusual whiteness, and large dark eyes. "Her hair was red, blood-red, and hung in long locks down to her shoulders, so that she could tie the strands together under her chin, which made her look as if her head had been cut off and the blood was gushing forth in red streams." Young Heine saw her often, attracted not only by her eerie beauty but by the blood-curdling stories and songs she knew. When once she showed him the executioner's sword, which had done service on a hundred occasions already, singing at the same time :

Willst du küssen das blanke Schwert,
Das der liebe Gott beschert ?

he kissed her lips in spite of the sword in her hand and in spite of the infamy attaching to all contact with her ostracized family. He kissed her, not only because he loved her, but to show his contempt for the old society and all its gloomy prejudices. "At that moment there blazed up within me," he adds, "the first flames of those two passions to which I consecrated the remainder of my life, the love of beautiful women and the love of the French Revolution."

II

HAMBURG

HEINE left school in the autumn of 1814 without finishing the curriculum, as his father had not the means to send him to an university. He was to follow a commercial career, and was sent to Frankfort, where he spent exactly a fortnight as apprentice to a banker, Rindskopf, and then remained just long enough to waste what money his father had given him. The prodigal son's return to Düsseldorf raised anew the problem of his future. It was solved by the intervention of Heine's rich uncle, Salomon Heine, who decided to give the youth another chance in his own banking house in Hamburg. In some mysterious way Heine must have impressed his uncle with his capacity for business, for two years later Salomon Heine rashly supplied his nephew with the necessary funds to set up in business on his own account as "Harry Heine & Co., Commission Agents in English Goods." A year sufficed to dispel the uncle's illusions. Heine retired from business, because, as he put it, business had retired from him. He was neither surprised nor inconsolable.

Salomon Heine was a very remarkable man. He had come to Hamburg with the proverbial taler in his pocket, and rose to be one of Hamburg's richest and most respected citizens. He not only kept his purse ever open to numerous needy relatives, but showered princely benefactions on his fellow-citizens, Jew and Gentile alike. He boasted that his education had cost his parents very little, and when we read the letters written by the seventy-year-old man¹ we can well

¹ *Heine-Reliquien*, herausgegeben von Heine-Geldern und Karpeles, Berlin, 1911.

believe it. But if he was devoid of all but the most rudimentary education, he was extraordinarily clear-headed, and showed in financial transactions an astuteness bordering on genius. In his dealings with needy supplicants he could be unpleasantly brusque, “un bourru bienfaisant,” Legras calls him, but in the end his good nature invariably got the upper hand. Heine had many proofs of that, and of an angelic readiness to forgive the often scurvy treatment he received at the poet's hands.

Salomon Heine had a very beautiful wife, and was the father of a son and several pretty daughters. It was the third daughter, Amalie, who was unwittingly responsible for a catastrophe more painful to Heine than the business failure had been. He saw Amalie, he loved her and his love was not returned, indeed was in no way encouraged. The historical data of this love adventure could not very well be simpler. He told his friend Sethe,¹ that he had the most undeniable, the most incontrovertible proof that she did not love him. So hopeless was his plight from the very first that it is very questionable whether he ever ventured even to declare his love. Of the depth of his passion and the sincerity of his disappointment nobody can doubt after reading Heine's letter to Sethe of October 27, 1816.

“She loves me *not*!—Dear Christian, you must utter the last little word quite, quite softly. In the first word there lies the eternal living paradise, but in the last there lurks the ever-living hell.—If you could just catch a glimpse of the face of your poor friend, how pale he looks, how troubled and frantic, then your just wrath at his long silence would be appeased; indeed it would be best if you could cast one glance into his inmost soul—then you would really learn to love him.” . . .

“I have seen her again—

Dem Teufel meine Seele,
Dem Henker sei der Leib,
Doch ich allein erwähle
Für mich das schöne Weib.

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, October 27, 1816.

Ha! Doesn't it make you shudder, Christian? Well may you shudder, I do too.—Burn the letter. God be merciful to my poor soul.—It was not I who wrote these words.—It was a pale man, sitting on a chair, who wrote them. It is all because it is midnight.—O God! Frenzy does not sin. My friend! Breathe it not aloud; I have just built up a beautiful house of cards, and right up on the very top of it I stand, holding her in my arms!" . . .

"Far from her, for years carrying a burning longing for her about in my heart, that is the torment of hell, and wrings forth the cry of anguish. But to be close to her, and yet have to yearn, often in vain, for endless long weeks, for a single glimpse of her, the sole source of my happiness—a—a—and, and, O! O! O! Christian! even the most pious, the purest spirit could flare up in wild, mad impiety."

There are a few things here which strike us as artificial and stagey, such as the "a—a—and—and" and the "Oh! Oh! Oh!" The reference to the pallor of his face may be suggestive of morbid vanity, of lapses into which Heine is indeed frequently guilty, but the language is precisely that of a romantic youth, not yet twenty, desperately in love, unspeakably unhappy, wildly groping for a way to express what is in him and through sheer want of experience falling into errors the more skilful artist would have avoided.

While there is no doubt of the sincerity of his passion, we have to distinguish between the actual facts and the expression the poet lends to his feelings in his verse. Many biographers still confuse poetic truth with historical truth. The more naïve of them, for no better reason than that Heine says so in this or that poem, assume that Amalie loved Heine, plighted her troth with a kiss (with several or many, that would depend on the poem), that when she kissed him she gave him a sprig of myrtle and, when he left Hamburg, she promised she would wait until he had his doctor's degree; that in his absence she allowed her envious and spiteful relatives to rush her into a union with a man she did not love, but who had greater wealth than any half-dozen poets were ever likely to have, and so on. All this, no doubt, made a more

exciting story for the biographer than what had actually occurred. A hopeless passion unavowed and unrequited is of everyday occurrence and, especially in view of the glaring unsuitability of the two persons concerned, would call for nothing more than a passing feeling of pity, while the expanded version with its social background and its suggestion of a conflict between money and genius might well arouse a variety of emotions and call forth a strong partisan feeling in favour of the ill-used poet. Others again, fully aware of the fictitious character of these biographical details, have accused Heine of gross insincerity for trying to palm off fiction for fact or of inordinate vanity for making himself play a far more important part than was warranted by the actual events. Both views, the naïve and the vituperative, seem to arise from a very bourgeois conception of poetry.

Failure to recognize the fundamental truth that a book of lyrics is a chronicle of the incidents of the inner life of the poet, not of the outer, accounts for the distortion of many facts of the poet's life and incidentally throws an unfavourable light on Amalie, who in the lyrics is represented as a faithless, mercenary, heartless and not particularly modest woman. She might have had good reason to complain of the author of the lyrics, had not Heine with regard to his passion for Amalie as also, later on, with regard to his love for Amalie's younger sister, been discretion itself. The identity of both women remained a profound mystery for a great number of years: Therese's name he never mentions in either poems, prose works or letters, and Amalie is referred to by name for the first and only time in a private letter to Varnhagen in 1823 which was not published until long after.

Though his infatuation for his fair cousin seems to be the keynote of most of his love lyrics of a portion of the *Buch der Lieder*, it is at least doubtful whether this painful experience played as important a part in his life. To represent him, as has often been done, as a man whose whole life was shattered by one great love catastrophe



SALOMON HEINE

Portrait by O. Speckter, Hamburg

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would be a gross exaggeration. "Nothing could be more erroneous," says Lichtenberger,¹ "than to see in Heine the martyr of a great love which from then on wraps itself up in its grief." In the sensitive poet's heart it caused no doubt a formidable upheaval the memory of which sets his whole being vibrating for many years to come, but it never suppressed in him the passionate lover of life he was above all things.

His life in Hamburg was not spent in moping and tearful lamentations. There were other women in the city and he was not very particular in his choice. As it was in Hamburg, so it was in other places, the redeeming feature of his erotic experiences being that with characteristic frankness he makes no attempt to cast the glamour of romance or even the veil of conventional decency over his multitudinous escapades. His poems, often very coarse, to Seraphine, Angélique, Clarisse, etc., his private letters and the testimony of his contemporaries show that in everyday life the martyr's crown often sat lightly on the poet's brow. "I am no longer a monotheist in love matters," he wrote a few years after leaving Hamburg, "I love the Medicean Venus and Hofrat Bauer's pretty cook. Alas! in both cases in vain."

If, nevertheless, Heine left Hamburg a sadder man, this is due to a variety of causes of which his disappointment in love was only one. His health, which throughout his life remained a source of grave anxiety, began for the first time to occupy him seriously. Headaches often lasting several days, along with ever increasing nervousness, made the prospect of physical well-being a gamble and were the main cause of that distressing irritability which made him so unpleasant to live with. Further, he was now in his twenty-second year and his attempts to earn a living had hitherto ended in the dreariest failure. Law, the new venture proposed by his uncle, had no more charm for him than commerce. For everything, the necessities of life

¹ H. Lichtenberger, *Henri Heine penseur*, Paris, 1905.

as well as for his amusements, he would for a number of years have to depend on the charity of his uncle, a most humiliating position for a sensitive man and intolerable for a nervous subject. The wants of Heine, the epicure, were by no means few. He looked upon many of the luxuries of the ordinary man as indispensable pre-requisites of even the dullest state of contentment, and his uncle's want of imagination in that respect appeared to him as unpardonable niggardliness. Not that he would not in his calmer moments take a more philosophical view of his uncle's attitude. "We are constantly having differences," he writes in 1825, speaking of his uncle, "but I love him deeply, in fact almost more than I can realize. We are also similar in manner and character: the same stubborn boldness, incredible softness of heart and incalculable madness, only that fortune has made of him a millionaire and of me the contrary, I mean a poet, and has thus developed us along entirely different lines in viewpoint and mode of living."¹

That he did not possess the strength of character to free himself from this bondage only made the humiliation more galling. These four calamities: an empty heart, ill-health, financial dependence, and the nagging consciousness of his impotence to achieve freedom, are the spectres that dog his steps relentlessly and haunt his dreams until his dying day. Besides, the whole atmosphere of his surroundings was far from friendly, with his uncle's family envious of the needy interloper, the orthodox Jews hostile to one who had no use for Judaism and made no secret of it, while the Christians though ready to kow-tow to the Jewish millionaire had nothing but contempt for the doubly unfortunate poor Jew. In artistic and literary interest as manifested by the inhabitants, the town was many years behind the rest of Germany—the horizon of the average Hamburger was bounded by good eating and drinking and the soul of Hamburg resided in the Exchange. Heine's one delight

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, Letter to Friederike Robert, October 12, 1825.

and compensation was that he felt himself to be better than the rest.¹

From this situation Heine was rescued by Salomon Heine's decision to grant his nephew an annual allowance of 400 talers to enable him to study law at one of the German universities.

¹ F. Lewald, *Zwölf Bilder nach dem Leben*, Berlin, 1888.

III

THE LAW STUDENT

BONN AND GÖTTINGEN

THE university of Bonn, which proved to be Heine's choice, was one of the younger German universities. It dated back to 1786 and had, during the French régime, been closed by Napoleon, who, after subduing the German armies, still entertained a wholesome dread of German thought. In 1818 the institution had been reopened by Frederick William III, and a number of the most eminent professors had been invited to occupy its chairs. After a very merciful entrance test already referred to, Heine was enrolled as a student in 1819. His appearance seems to have impressed different people in different ways. J. B. Rousseau speaks of his short and muscular figure, his fair hair, his high and thoughtful forehead, and his ironical but good-natured smile, while Menzel seems chiefly struck by the fabulous ugliness and ridiculous obtrusiveness of the "little Jew Heine." According to his own account he wore at the time a red cap, a long white or yellowish coat, and gold-rimmed spectacles, while his habit of holding his hands behind his back while walking gave him a peculiar duck-like waddle. Drawing from the wealth of his own or some facetious informant's imagination, Ducros,¹ one of the most inaccurate of Heine's biographers, indulges his taste for the picturesque by adding the following fantastic details to the description of Heine's costume: "A black velvet cap, surmounted by a red feather, a lace collar, red doublet, wide red trousers, over his shoulders a purple cloak, at his left side a long sword."

Contrary to what we might expect of the Heine of

¹ Ducros, *Henri Heine*, p. 127.

the Hamburg period, he proved an exemplary student, almost what the Germans call a "Musterknabe," a model boy: he did not smoke, he was extremely moderate in drinking, and he impressed his professors by his industry and the regularity of his attendance, a most daring innovation, running counter to all the most sacred traditions of German students in their first semester.

As soon as Heine arrived in Bonn he was drawn into the Burschenschaft movement and became a member. The Burschenschaft was an association of students which, founded originally at Jena in 1815, had soon spread to many other German universities. Its character was German and Christian, and its aim a free united Germany. It was a direct outcome of the war of liberation; most of the original founders had done their duty to the fatherland in that war. They were the very élite of the students who, after freeing their country from the foreign invader, found it hard to efface and suppress themselves entirely as active participants in the working out of the country's welfare, to return like so many dumb beasts to the stable from which their master had called them and to await the good pleasure of that master, ready to do his bidding whenever he required their services. This master, Frederick William III, had in time of direst need promised his people such participation, but had not seen fit to keep his promise. He had himself put an idea into their heads which had come to stay, as subsequent events proved.

The Germans have always had a wonderful faith in their universities, and at this time too the country's hope of better things centred on the academic youth of the fatherland. With the exception of a small group of more daring spirits the Burschenschafters contented themselves with thinking beautiful thoughts and offering up incense on the altar of their dream—a free united Germany. They went into ecstasy over the greatness and glory of medieval Germany, over Arminius and Barbarossa and the old German virtues, some of them

affected what they conceived to be the old German costume, wore their hair long and, to distinguish themselves from the hereditary enemy, the polite and effeminate French, adopted a manly boorishness which indeed fulfilled its purpose admirably.

The society, however, laid stress not only on unimpeachable patriotism, but was equally emphatic in its condemnation of any lapses from their austere ideal regarding the relation of the sexes. They conceived chastity to be in a very special sense a German virtue, and any frailty along this line was visited with immediate expulsion; no unchaste man could be a real German. The atmosphere was clearly a novel, if not a trying, one for the Heine of Hamburg, but there was the priceless compensation for Heine, the Jew, that the Teutonism of the Burschenschaft was in no way antisemitic, made no distinction between Jew and Christian, and thus allowed Heine for the first time in his life to feel himself a German.

Heine was at that time far more German than he generally gets credit for. At school he heartily shared the enthusiasm aroused by the War of Liberation, and he wrote a poem of over twenty stanzas beginning: "Deutschlands Ruhm will ich besingen," in which the French are compared to demons from hell, Germany is the homeland of faith and virtue, the Germans are lions, and although they have understood Christ's gentle word they seek bloody vengeance for the false oaths of France. No German high-school boy of undoubted Teutonic lineage could possibly have taken his mouth fuller. All this at a time when according to common popular superstition he loved the French so much that he composed "The Grenadiers" to glorify their emperor. As late as 1824, when it had already begun to dawn upon him that his love for the German fatherland was not reciprocated and that the Jew was still treated as a pariah, he wrote: "I know that I am one of the most German beasts. I know only too well that a German atmosphere is to me what water is to the fish, that I

cannot leave this life-giving element, and that I should become as dry as a dried codfish if I were ever to leap out of the water of Germanism." It is also noteworthy that there is no indication at that time of anything liberal, let alone revolutionary, in Heine's political views. We have no evidence that he even criticized the government's reactionary treatment of the University and the student societies. This is all the more surprising as Heine joined the Burschenschaft at a most critical time, shortly before the dissolution of the society, the manner of which was as arbitrary as it was ridiculous.

The Burschenschaft's difficulties with the government began in 1817. On the 18th of October of that year Burschenschaft delegations from all over Germany met on the Wartburg to commemorate the battle of Leipzig and the tercentenary of the beginning of the Reformation. The object of the celebration was manifestly harmless, and so was the official programme, which began with the singing of a hymn and closed with the taking of the communion on the second day. A student of theology and a prominent clergyman, nothing less than a *Generalsuperintendent*, were the principal speakers. Unexpectedly, and in spite of these religious safeguards, the festival was invested with political significance, after the main body of the students had left, by the act of a few of the participants, who burnt some reactionary writings. The governments of Central Europe shook with fear, and all the German universities were placed under police supervision like so many ticket-of-leave men, and when, shortly after, the reactionary writer, Kotzebue, was killed by a former Jena student, Prussian students were forbidden to study at Jena, and in the autumn of 1819, shortly after Heine's arrival in Bonn, the Burschenschaft was dissolved as a dangerous association.

Now Heine lived in the midst of all this bitter disappointment and righteous indignation caused by the ludicrous panic of the authorities, yet there is no record to show that he expressed any sympathy with the cause

of the students. Though the mere absence of such a record proves little enough, we know that Heine was hardly awake yet politically; we see this clearly in his first prose writings, in his *Berlin Letters*, his *Polen* and the *Harzreise*, where at most he makes playful references to political questions which nobody need take seriously as the expression of a deep-seated political conviction. The chances are that he shed no tears over the troubles of the Burschenschaft. If he had any political leanings at the time they were more likely to be of the romantic conservative than of the democratic order, and the hot-heads of the Burschenschaft had no attraction for him. Besides, Heine possessed none of the qualities that go to make up a tribune of the people or a leader of a crowd, he could not even act with a crowd; the only part that suited him was that of the lone wolf. He was often in subsequent years denounced as a demagogue: no one ever deserved that appellation less than Heine.

Undoubtedly the most important factor in Heine's evolution in Bonn was the interest and sympathy shown him by one of the professors, August Wilhelm von Schlegel, then still at the height of his fame as a literary critic who may be said to have laid the foundation of Heine's verse technique, and to have initiated him into the mysteries and paradoxes of that curiously heterogeneous literary movement, Romanticism, of which Schlegel was the chief exponent. Though of distressing aridity himself as a poet, he had a strongly developed poetic sense, a wonderfully sensitive ear for rhyme and rhythm, a profound knowledge of all the technical mysteries of the poet's craft, and a keen eye for poetic talent. He was the first great man Heine had seen since he had gazed in awe at the godlike Napoleon riding down the avenue at Düsseldorf. Many years later, when his attitude toward his old teacher had changed completely, he recalled the memories of his student days:

"To this very day I feel the reverent shudder which passed through my soul when I stood before his desk and heard him speak. At that time I wore a white woolly coat, a red cap,

long fair hair and no gloves. Herr Schlegel, however, wore kid gloves and was dressed quite in keeping with the latest Paris styles; he still had about him the scent of good society and eau de mille fleurs; he was neatness and elegance personified, and when he spoke of the Lord Chancellor of England, he added 'my friend.' Beside him stood his servant in the most baronial livery of the Schlegels and snuffed the candles which burned in silver candlesticks standing together with a glass of sugar-water on the desk of the great man, Servants in livery! wax lights! silver candelabras! my friend, the chancellor of England! Kid gloves! Sugar-water! what unheard-of things in the lecture-room of a German professor! This glamour dazzled us young people not a little, and I dedicated three odes to Herr Schlegel, each one of which began with the words: 'Oh thou, who art, etc.' But only in poetry would I have dared to address so distinguished a man so familiarly. His appearance no doubt lent him a certain distinction. On his small narrow head there still gleamed a few silver hairs, and his body was so thin, so emaciated, so transparent, that he seemed to be all spirit, that he almost looked like the symbol of spiritualism."

Already in Hamburg Heine had published poems in a periodical *Der Wächter* under the pseudonym Sy Freudhold Riesenharf (an anagram for Harry Heine Düsseldorf). It is also highly probable that he brought with him to Bonn the manuscript of most of the songs of *Junge Leiden*. He felt no conceit about them, in fact thought they were the merest trash, but when he had shown them to his Bonn friend, J. B. Rousseau, as the work of a friend in Hamburg, and Rousseau had, to Heine's unspeakable joy, pronounced them to be the work of a poetic genius, he was encouraged to submit them to Schlegel, who immediately recognized their merit. Heine tells us¹ that Schlegel saw much to find fault with and that, as the result, many poems had to be rewritten. Through his contact with Schlegel he gained something even more valuable than knowledge of technical details, he acquired the habit, never again abandoned, of severest self-criticism. "Be severe with yourself," he says, "that is the artist's foremost law."²

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, July 15, 1820.

² *Ibid.*, October 29, 1820.

Schlegel rendered his pupil a more dubious service when he set the seal of his approval on Heine's romantic mode of thought and feeling and lent the weight of his authority to a disposition which stood rather in need of correction and discouragement. It was Schlegel's view that the first task of all poetry was to nullify the process and the laws of the rationally thinking mind and to take us back to the beautiful illusions of imagination and the original chaos of human nature, setting up at the same time as the highest principle of this new romantic poetry that the caprice of the poet shall be subject to no law. As a protest against a reign of pedantic rules, a poetically barren and despotic rationalism, this declaration was sufficiently emphatic if it was nothing else, but as the basis for any new creative principle it could not but prove unsatisfactory. The romantic theory became a conglomerate of mutually contradictory tenets. With its apotheosis of the *Volkslied* and its claim that poetry should permeate even the everyday life of the artisan, it assumed a democratic veneer the thinness of which was shown by the fact that romanticism appealed in reality exclusively to the aristocratic temperament. By proposing the spirit and culture of the Middle Ages as models to be imitated, it contributed enormously to the political and religious reaction of the early part of the nineteenth century, yet by recognizing the ego as the sole source of valid law, it could not very well be more revolutionary, and there should have resulted as many revolutions as there were individuals, ending in a state of the most hopeless anarchy. Romantic irony plays with everything, including the artist's own creations, it respects nothing under the sun, yet many of the romanticists were, or became, or ought to have become, devout Catholics. Romanticism poses as a German national movement, yet it is most cosmopolitan in its sources of inspiration and the models it sets up.

It can well be seen why the romantic writers, who made real contributions of lasting value to literature, were not the out-and-out fanatics like Tieck and the Schlegels but

their successors, and camp-followers, who were content to appropriate one or other of the precious conquests of romanticism: the interest in the Middle Ages, the recognition of the artistic merit of the simplicity of the Volkslied, the vindication of religious emotions in poetry, but declined to surrender themselves body and soul to a theory of art which could only lead to the destruction of all art. Heine, the man of many moods and swayed by every one of them in turn, stood in no need of a doctrine proclaiming the harmfulness of all restraint. He was not, however, a blind worshipper at the romantic shrine. In a short article on Romanticism, his first prose publication which appeared in 1820 in the *Rheinisch-Westfälischer Anzeiger*, and was written in defence of the Romantic school, he protests against that form of romanticism which is a mere mixture of "Spanish tints, Scottish mist, Italian tinkling and vague and confused images." He sees no need for all this dimness and obscurity, and points to "our two most plastic poets, Goethe and Schlegel," as perfect examples of plasticity. We can forgive him his preposterous juxtaposition of Goethe and Schlegel in consideration of the good sense of the remainder of the passage.

In spite of all encouragement and the promise of more general recognition and even fame, Heine was not really happy in Bonn. After a second semester, in which he led a "sad, sickly and solitary life" as he told a friend, he woke up to the fact that the primary object of his stay at Bonn was not the study of the technique of verse, but the study of law, and that to the latter alone he could look for ultimate financial independence, a fact he had most light-heartedly lost sight of in the midst of his literary diversions.

Other reasons for his unhappiness at Bonn are not hard to find. He had few friends, he possessed none of the prerequisites of the popular student, he was rather older than the ordinary freshman, he abhorred a noisy crowd—especially if it reeked of tobacco, he was hopelessly out of the running when it came to drinking. He

had the evil reputation of being a "Streber" or plodder, and of exercising his caustic wit indiscriminately on all he met. A hedgehog makes an unpleasant companion and is generally made to feel it. Though his appearance was really rather peculiar he was exceedingly vain and could not pass before a mirror without admiring himself. Was it likely, moreover, that he would feel altogether happy in the German Christian atmosphere of the Burschenschaft? It is true that according to the constitution of 1818, it was to be a free union of all students willing to dedicate their mental and physical powers to the service of the fatherland. Its motto was unity, liberty and equality, and if the culture it had in view was not only German but Christian, this latter feature would not seriously embarrass Heine, brought up as he was in the Catholic environment of Düsseldorf and in a Catholic lyceum. In Hamburg he was even subject to curious fits of yearning for more intimate relations with the Catholic Church.¹ The trouble was probably with individual students who found it difficult, if not impossible, to break with the century-old, ingrained habit of suspicion and intolerance and to treat a Jew as an equal. The reference of Menzel, the president of the Burschenschaft, to him as "the little Jew Heinrich Heine" may be symptomatic of an unfriendly undercurrent.

In the autumn of 1820 Heine sought an atmosphere more conducive to the prosecution of his legal studies, and he hoped to find it in Göttingen.

The change from the stimulating modernity and the breezy youthfulness of Bonn to the musty, archaic conditions of Göttingen was unpleasant, but rendered possible that seclusion and freedom from distraction so essential in the circumstances. Bonn being a new university, cliques had hardly had time to form, and in any case the all-pervading spirit of the Burschenschaft forbade it. At Göttingen, too, there was a Burschenschaft, for within a year of its dissolution by the Karlsbad Resolutions the society kept cropping up again at different

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, October 27, 1816.

universities, as a secret society in some, more openly, yet with a judicious degree of latency and discretion, in others. At Göttingen, however, it had a dangerous rival in the Landsmannschaften ultra-conservative, rigidly exclusive and snobbishly aristocratic fraternities, which were favoured by the government. The professoriate was a quaint mixture of dry-as-dust pedantic reactionaries like Mitscherlich, whose proud boast it was never to have read Schiller or Goethe, and thoroughly modern and inspiring teachers like Eichhorn and Sartorius. In his *Harzreise* Heine has erected an imperishable monument to the city where people walked about like corpses and where a knowledge of the genitive of *mensa* was the criterion of a man's respectability.

It cannot be said that in Göttingen Heine showed any greater interest in his law books than he had shown at Bonn. The lure of literary, historical and linguistic studies again proved too strong, and the artist's creative instinct too irresistible to leave much time for anything else. The few letters we have from Göttingen give ample proof of this. He had begun a tragedy, *Almansor*, at Bonn, had got as far as the third act and anticipated the termination and publication in the near future of what he thought would be a stupendous work. Unfortunately, fate would not permit him to spend more than four months at Göttingen, a time made painfully memorable by a series of bitter disappointments. Amalie, by whom his heart was still enthralled, became engaged to another. Brockhaus, the publisher, returned with the usual thanks and the well-known stereotyped explanations, followed we may safely assume by bitter regret, the manuscript of the poet's first volume of verse *Traum und Lied*.¹ To avenge an insult, Heine challenged another student to a duel, which was only prevented from taking place by the timely intervention of the university authorities who, as a punishment, rusticated the challenger for six months. To make up the proverbial

¹ See Heine's letter offering the manuscript to Brockhaus. Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, November 7, 1820.

battalion of misfortunes the Burschenschaft expelled Heine, probably for an offence against that virtue without which the real German was inconceivable.¹ Heine bore the rustication with becoming cheerfulness but took the expulsion very much to heart. The society had, after all, meant a very great deal to him, it had been the source of noble inspiration and of pride, it meant the companionship of young men of whom the fatherland could indeed be proud, and membership was equivalent to an acknowledgment that a Jew could not only be a German, but could even be a patriotic German.

The expulsion closed for good a chapter in his life, it terminated the period of Heine's naïve, unquestioning German patriotism, and as any disappointment which hurt his vanity was apt to turn to gall and wormwood in his heart, we shall find scattered throughout his writings many bitter jibes aimed at the Burschenschaft and its ideals; he will henceforth forget the bright aspects of the movement and remember the ludicrous excrescences only.

¹ O. F. Scheuer, *Heine als Student*, p. 32.

IV

BERLIN

IN the spring of 1821 Heine went to Berlin, where his family decided that he should continue his studies. Berlin was called the Metropolis of Art and Science, for no better reason than that the inhabitants talked and dreamed of nothing but music and the drama. Fabulous sums were spent by the government on the theatre, and particularly the opera and the ballet, and the Director of Plays was the most important person after the King. It was the paradise of dancers, musicians and actors. Apart from that the city was dead, there were no other interests because no others were allowed. The people seemed perfectly happy and contented under this régime, and had not even begun to suspect that in the circumstances their happiness was really not at all to their credit. Political life was confined to foreigners and students. The activities of the latter were so innocuous that their very harmlessness aroused the suspicions of the government, who dissolved the recently recognized Burschenschaft. There was consequently no student life as there had been in Bonn or Göttingen. What little there was did not attract Heine, and when he became aware of an unpleasant and very pronounced antisemitic streak in the student attitude he cut himself adrift altogether. This second shock to his Teutonism still further determined the critical attitude he will assume in the future towards Germany and things German.

The part played in the social life of Berlin by the university was surprisingly small considering its brilliant galaxy of eminent scholars : the jurists Gans and Savigny, the historian Raumer, the philosopher Hegel, the theologian Schleiermacher, and the philologists Wolff and

Bopp, to mention only a few. The most prodigious of these was Hegel; he affected contemporary thought more deeply than all the others taken together. His popularity was phenomenal, though, owing to his clumsy and nebulous style, few could really be said to do more than hover around the periphery of his system, dazzled by the effulgence of one or other of its radiant emanations. The universality of Hegel's appeal was due to the revolutionizing influence his philosophy exercised over other domains of academic thought, particularly theology, jurisprudence, history and æsthetics, so that no cultured person could fail to come within its magic circle. A perplexing feature was the protean character of its political applicability. Hegel is often referred to as the founder of the philosophy of the Prussian state system, but it is amusing to see how one king, Frederick William III, looked upon Hegel's "Staatsphilosophie" as the very pillar of his absolutism, while his successor, Frederick William IV, was equally convinced that Hegelian philosophy was at the bottom of all his troubles. While the conservative Junker clung to the dictum: "The real is the rational," or in more popular language: "Whatever is is right," the liberal demagogue saw no objection to substituting what he considered to be rational for what, for the time being, was real, and then deriving the same sanction and comfort as the conservative adversary from the same maxim. The trouble was, as has been said, that Hegel's system was conservative in the practical, revolutionary in its logical part.

It will be generally admitted nowadays that Hegel's importance lies more in his logical method than in his results. Heine, who frankly confesses that Hegel's system made impossible demands on his intelligence, yet felt, with thousands, equally nonplussed by Hegel's profundity that his teaching nevertheless "shook the foundations on which eternal truths were enthroned like weather-beaten idols." But Heine owed Hegel a great deal more. With Hegel, reason, exiled under the romantic régime, came into her own again, and this con-

tributed not a little to the downfall of romanticism. If Heine, who never ceased to be a romanticist entirely, merited the title of a "romantique défroqué," he owes it largely to Hegel, in whose lecture-room he left his cowl. On the other hand, a very characteristic tenet of romanticism, the sovereignty of the individual, received philosophical confirmation in Hegel's system and Heine was not slow to take advantage of his teaching to develop his personality, if need be in opposition, to the whole world, assert himself at all costs, and consider himself the source of all law. Even many years later, when his emaciated, pain-racked body made him feel less godlike, and when in a contrite mood he referred to the time of his Hegelian infatuation as the time when he herded swine with the Hegelians, the memory still thrilled him, and he wrote in his *Geständnisse*: "I was young and proud, and it tickled my pride when I learnt from Hegel that it was no God in heaven, as my grandmother thought, who was God, but that I myself here on earth was God. I was the living moral law, the source of all right and authority."

While in Berlin Heine wrote his *Briefe aus Berlin* for the *Rheinisch-Westfälischer Musenalmanach*. These letters are a perfect reflection of the inanity of the life of the city and the shallow bavardage of its newspapers. "Anyone reading our newspapers," says a contemporary writer, "must imagine that the whole German people consists of gossiping nursemaids and theatrical critics." There are few touches promising us the Heine of a later period: the very droll description of the ways in which the popularity of a famous air from Weber's *Freischütz* relentlessly pursued him everywhere, the irony of a comparison of the reception accorded Sir Walter Scott's son, when he visited Berlin, and what might be the fate of the sons of great Germans in similar circumstances, occasional flashes of anti-Teutonism and cosmopolitanism and one solitary joyous gap caused by the censor's pencil which shows that Heine must have come very near saying something the censor considered to be "staatsgefähr-

lich." We are not surprised to learn that Heine by no means said all he felt about the situation in Berlin, he only considered it unsafe to say more at the time.¹

Beyond this the letters are just lively journalism, rendering the impressions of a gay and colourful world entirely new to the writer. His unrestrained, naïve enjoyment and the abrupt transition from one object of interest to another reminds one of the merry, breathless prattle of a child showing its Christmas presents. Like the child too, he surrenders to every mood of the moment, supremely indifferent to any question of logical or ethical consistency, and so the Rhinelander and Jew who had good reason to detest Prussian statesmanship goes into raptures over "our king, that noble venerable figure," and "the princes whose noble faces bear an expression of courage and majesty." The impressionable poet was throughout his life far more readily swayed, favourably or unfavourably, by personalities rather than by the ideas or causes they represented. In any case his enthusiasm for Berlin cooled considerably in later years: "Berlin has always disgusted me," he said to Stahr, forgetting the good time he had had there, "it is such a dry kind of a lie."²

The comparatively mild antisemitism Heine had hitherto encountered in other parts of Germany had not awakened in his heart any feeling of solidarity with his co-religionists, but the more virulent hostility he found in Berlin in combination with other circumstances led to an at least temporary revival of interest in Judaism such as he had not known since the days of his childhood.

Even in his period of thoroughgoing romanticism Heine must occasionally have had an uneasy feeling that, after all, the German Middle Ages were not really the past on which it was most natural for him to dwell, that the religious aspects of the Burschenschaft movement were foreign to the traditions of his own kindred and perhaps even that some of the specifically romantic

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, May 4, 1824.

² Adolf Stahr, *Zwei Monate in Paris*, p. 331.

moods and emotions he experienced were devoid of spontaneity and were the mere echo, the sympathetic ripple of the emotions of others. His friction with the Christian medievalizing Burschenschaft and the anti-semitism of Berlin had converted these suspicions into convictions. Moreover, the exile from Teutonism now had the alternative of drawing closer to the traditions of his race or breaking with them completely by going over to Christianity, as so many Jews were doing at that time. That he must ultimately do the latter was a foregone conclusion from the moment he decided on the legal profession, in which there was no room for Jews. That he put off the evil moment as long as possible by making a last attempt to cast his anchor in Judaism was due partly to a very laudable feeling of self-respect, and partly to bitter hostility to the religion of the Burschenschaft. Perhaps it was due also to an ever-unsatisfied yearning for some soil in which his whole being could strike its roots: a religion, a set of racial traditions, a profession, a fatherland, a phase of political idealism or the heart of a good woman. Hitherto fate had denied him these. The determining factor in Heine's choice was again a personal one.

So far Heine had met few Jews of a high intellectual type. Berlin was full of them. Some of the most eminent among them, continuing the work of Jewish emancipation begun by Moses Mendelssohn, had founded the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*. The founders were Gans, Friedländer and Moser, who were soon joined by Zunz, Marcus and Bendavid.

Grave dangers were threatening Judaism. When, after Napoleon's defeat, civil equality was choked in the cradle the antisemitic reaction, encouraged by the government, set in, apparently determined to make up for lost time. It showed itself not merely by insisting on a return to the pre-Napoleonic state but by the breaking of promises and the violation of solemn engagements. Under the soldiers' rehabilitation scheme, for instance, all who had fought in the war against Napoleon were entitled to a

civil employment certificate; Jewish soldiers alone, although they had shed their blood in the same cause, were denied these certificates, and were left to sink or swim. Soon the general public took up the cue. Ridiculing Jews on the stage became a popular sport, a university professor of the eminence of Fries, the philosopher, wrote as early as 1816 a book concerning the "perils threatening the welfare and the character of the Germans through the Jews." When the rabble took a hand in the game and excesses against the Jews took place in different parts of the country, the Middle Ages seemed to have returned.

Not even within the pale of their own religion were the Jews left in peace. When Frederick William realized that the Jewish Reform Movement had been launched to enable educated Jews to be in touch with modern ideas, to be Germans and yet remain Jews, when he understood that the Reform Synagogue, with its German hymns, German prayers and German sermons, was the only possible form of religious service for the great mass of the Jews who knew no Hebrew, he issued a cabinet order that "the divine service of the Jews must be conducted in accordance with the traditional ritual and without the slightest innovation in language, ceremonies, prayers and songs." Educated Jews were thus placed between the devil and the deep sea, they had either to worship in a language they did not understand or become Christians. There was no other alternative, for the law of Prussia required everyone to profess some definite form of religious faith. As the result of this persecution and the ever-increasing difficulty the Jews experienced in finding a living, as most professions were closed to them, the number of conversions to Christianity, particularly in Berlin, became alarming. Judaism in that city came within calculable distance of total extinction, and the realization of the dream of Frederick William and of the Society for the Conversion of the Jews appeared assured.

To prevent this complete absorption there seemed to

be only two ways : a return to the segregation of the ghetto or some equivalent form of isolation, or, on the other hand, assimilation of the Jews to their Christian environment by raising their cultural level so that all differences should be effaced except that of religion. This latter alternative became the aim of the Society for the Culture and Science of Judaism. The acquisition of political rights was not expressly advocated as it was felt that these would follow in the wake of cultural equality. In any case, the political rights their Christian compatriots enjoyed were hardly worth making much fuss about. Schools were founded for Jewish boys, evening classes for Jewish orphans, and a review, *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, was published. Heine, deeply impressed by the personality, the enthusiasm and the learning of the founders of the Society, joined it in 1822. He showed at first considerable interest and energy, and for a time he acted as secretary and even taught history in the evening classes.

The dream was of short duration ; the Society never received sufficient encouragement and was dissolved in 1823. The great mass of the Jews was distressingly apathetic. The majority of the Jews, being poor (Judaism never was a lucrative religion), were naturally more concerned with their physical than with cultural problems ; the rich Jews had already turned their backs upon the cause of Judaism, and many of the intellectuals seemed to have made up their minds as to the ultimate fate of their race and religion, so there never were more than fifty members of the Society in Berlin nor more than twenty in Hamburg. The learning of the leaders was equalled only by their disinterested devotion to the cause, but they were painfully unpractical and had undertaken a task which, in view of the extremely limited resources at their disposal, was far too ambitious. Their very intellectualism, strongly alloyed as it was with modern scepticism, was likely to unfit them for missionary work among a class of Jews whose mentality was far removed from their own and on whom the learned

disquisitions on abstruse historical and philological subjects which filled the pages of the Review were absolutely wasted. Many articles were so badly written that even the cultured reader found it difficult to understand them. Heine, writing to Zunz, complains of the slovenly style of the third issue. "I am not expecting Goethean language but intelligible language, and I am firmly convinced that what I do not understand will not be intelligible to David Levy, Israel Moses or Nathan Itzig. I have studied all kinds of German, Saxon German, Swabian German, Frankish German, but the German of our Review I find most difficult of all. If I did not happen to know what Ludwig Marcus and Dr Gans want, I should not understand what they are writing."¹

In other ways too Heine proved a disturber of the peace. It is hard to believe that the main object of the Society, the reconciliation of historic Judaism and Christian German culture, really ever impressed him as anything more than a Utopian dream. He had from the first been attracted by the men rather than the movement, at least one is tempted to think so when reading his letters of this period. In proportion as his attitude toward Gans, Friedländer and Bendavid became more critical, his enthusiasm for the cause decreased perceptibly. Minor clashes occurred soon after he joined them. He thought that the political and civil status of the Jews should be the first item of the Society's programme; he was opposed to all religious compromise and would have nothing to do with a Christianized Judaism à la Friedländer, the man who years ago had proposed that Jews should join the Christian Church, accepting all the dogmas except that of the divinity of Christ. For Heine it is religious rabbinism or nothing. He showed in this a far clearer insight and a more practical grasp than his colleagues. A short trip to Poland in 1822 convinced him that the Jews could thrive as Jews only in a state of uncompromising seclusion such as he had found in Poland.

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, June 27, 1823.

That Heine himself had no intention of becoming an adherent of rabbinism appears from his letters, in which he declares himself the enemy of all positive religion, nor can he have had any great love for orthodox Jewry who had for some time been stupidly playing into the hands of the Prussian Government by invoking its aid against the liberalizing tendencies within the temple. It is in these circumstances doubly curious to see Heine setting aside all personal preference, advocating rabbinism as a mere logical necessity.

The Society contained within itself elements certain to bring about its demise sooner or later. The process was, however, accelerated by the action of the government, which in 1823 promulgated a number of reactionary edicts on the Jewish question, practically revoking the liberal measure of 1812 and making perfectly clear its intention to drive the Jews into the Christian Church by every kind of annoyance and restriction. Heine was not made of the stuff of which martyrs are fashioned and he had no illusions on that point. He felt that in the circumstances prominence among the detested Jews might conceivably draw down on him the special wrath of the Prussian authorities. He would have experienced no satisfaction at all, nor would there seem much sense in suffering for a faith he did not hold personally, nor in undergoing hardships for the Jews whom, as a race, he cordially disliked. The edicts of 1823 gave the Society the *coup de grâce*, and some of the leaders came to an inglorious though inevitable end. Gans, the captain, was the first to leave the sinking ship. He became a Christian in order to be eligible for a professorship, and others followed his example.

Apart from a deepening of his knowledge of historical Judaism, Heine gained little enough from his connection with the Society. That it ever gave him the idea that he was a Jewish poet is very problematical. When he did call himself a Jewish poet his meaning was clearly ironical, as in the concluding paragraphs of his letter to Moser of May 1823. If he ever had the idea, he must

soon have seen the incongruity of a Jewish poet writing in German detached from the Jewish religion, and as most Jewish traditions are religious in origin and character, detached from the traditions of his race as well. He had advanced too far beyond the narrow, specifically Jewish horizon to allow his thoughts and feelings to submit to its restraint. He felt like the mere ghost of the Jew he might have been, fighting for a cause which had been dead for many years, and succeeding in doing no more than "searching the battlefields of the past for the bones of the champions that had preceded him."¹ The occasions on which he subsequently wrote as a Jewish poet are very rare: a few short lyrics, a novel which remained a fragment, and the *Hebräische Melodien*, in which he does not succeed in sustaining the Jewish note.

¹ Heine's *Ludwig Marcus*. This little essay gives interesting details regarding the Society and some of its members.

V

SYMPATHIES AND ANTIPATHIES

SOON after his arrival in Berlin Heine became a constant visitor to some of the salons which played so important a part in the intellectual and artistic life of the community, oases in the desert of its inanity. The most prominent were those of Elizabeth von Hohenhausen and of Rahel Varnhagen von Ense. At both he met most of the people that were worth knowing, whether residents or visitors to Berlin, who were received irrespective of race or religion. Frau von Hohenhausen had already made Heine's acquaintance in Hamburg, had advised him to translate some of Byron's poems, and had even then, unfortunately for Heine, discovered a certain resemblance between the two poets, although Heine had by that time done little enough to deserve the flattering comparison. By the time Heine appeared the myth had taken root in Berlin society, so that the unfortunate and rather shy and retiring youth had really no choice, he had to accept the ill-fitting laurel and act accordingly. Somehow he did not in the least look like a Byron, anything but that. His exterior was by no means imposing, he was rather below average height, his features were not striking. Being short-sighted, he had a habit of screwing up his eyes, which were not particularly lustrous. He spoke rarely and then softly, monotonously and slowly.¹ Nothing suggested the superman.

It cannot even be said that during his Berlin period he was particularly interested in Byron's poetry. According to his friend Rousseau,² he took great pleasure in reading Byron in 1820, and we know that during the same year

¹ Hermann Schiff in Houben, *Gespräche mit Heine*, p. 40.

² Houben, *Gespräche mit Heine*, p. 25.

he translated *Childe Harold* and portions of *Manfred*, but he confessed in 1824 that he had not read Byron for several years. His two most impressive assets in the eyes of the public were that, like Byron, he had had an unhappy love affair, and like Byron, along with the rest of Europe, he was oppressed by the *Weltschmerz* of which Byron was the most brilliant exponent. A very thin Byronic record! Unfortunately this very superficial similarity between the two poets was often overstressed to the great detriment of Heine, for in almost all things in which they can be compared with regard to character and experience of life Heine beside Byron shrinks to very modest proportions. What is Heine's unrequited love for the frigid Amalie, his affection for the gross and ignorant Mathilde compared with Byron's great passions? What an abyss separates the hero of Missolonghi from the journalist safely ensconced in his study, sending his shafts at an enemy hundreds of miles away! In this futile comparison of Byron and Heine we are, as Walzel¹ points out, tempted to neglect the things in which Heine was incomparable: his impressionistic vividness, his keen and unerring power of observation, and that charming frankness with which he confesses his faults and weaknesses.

From now on, however, a great deal more was expected of him; he would have to make good the reputation thus thrust on him of being the German incarnation of Byron. So he began to ape the English poet consciously: he assumed a gloomy, blasé expression, gave himself the reputation of being an accomplished and insatiable roué (a literary fiction he owes not solely to the malevolence of his enemies but largely to his own gasconades). He went about with his hair dishevelled and a flowing necktie just like Byron, and he referred to Byron as his cousin. The Berlin salons received this double of the legendary Byron with open arms, and Heine was in danger of sacrificing his native genius on the altar of a literary craze. Fortunately one of the salons, the most influ-

¹ Walzel's edition of Heine, Introduction.

ential, was presided over by a lady of very unusual good sense and intellectual honesty, Rahel Varnhagen von Ense. If Heine was not entirely carried off his feet by the incense of the Byron myth he probably owes it to this "little lady with the big soul." She may not have been "the cleverest woman in the world," as Heine calls her, but at all events she possessed the perspicacity to see a great deal more in the young poet than merely a Byronic mirage: she saw his strength and his weakness as well; and while her praise might on occasion be as fulsome as that of the rest, she could be merciless in her criticism when she thought he required it, and the vain and touchy young man had to get over it as best he could.

In Rahel's salon men and women had to show themselves as they were, not as they would like to appear. Pretence and ostentation, shams and falsehood all melted away in the presence of that little woman who penetrated and judged her visitors with marvellous quickness and with unerring certainty, speaking the truth without fear or favour and expecting all her friends above all to be true to themselves. "Let yourself go when you are working," she once wrote to Varnhagen; "think of no friend, of no model, not of the great masters unless it be to get away from them; don't think of the impression, don't think of anything outside. Don't put anything in your work but yourself and the things you see and the way you see them." Her husband, Varnhagen von Ense, was a highly cultured man, at first in the diplomatic service, later devoting his energies entirely to historical, biographical and critical work. He, too, was not blind to Heine's weak points, though, on the whole, he was not quite so relentless in telling him about them. Varnhagen was one of the staunchest friends the poet ever had. As one of the critics of the *Gesellschafter* and the *Rheinblüten*, he was one of the first to discover Heine as a literary prodigy of astounding originality, and Heine never hesitated to appeal to his friendship whenever he was in difficulties with regard to the public, or his uncle, or the Prussian Government, indeed it is difficult to find any letter he

wrote to Varnhagen that does not contain at least one request of some service or other. His gratitude was not always commensurate with the service rendered.

In the early 'twenties the Goethe cult had reached its culminating point in Germany. It assumed incredible proportions, and often manifested itself in the most ludicrous manner.¹ A great part of the German reading public seemed to take leave of their senses and lose sight of all critical standards. Everything that Goethe had ever done or said or written was fervently admired, and even some of Goethe's later works which bear the unmistakable stamp of old age and are really incredibly boring, such as *Die natürliche Tochter*, *Pandora* and *Elpenor*, were extolled as unsurpassed masterpieces. Berlin became the centre of this cult, with Varnhagen as "Goethe's Vicegerent on earth" and Rahel as high priestess.

It was natural enough that Rahel anticipated little difficulty in enrolling her protégé Heine among the worshippers. It was not quite so easy. Heine hated all positive religions, and the Goethe cult as practised in Berlin was uncommonly like a positive religion with its God in Weimar, a pope in Berlin, and standards of taste as immovable as the dogmas of any Church. Besides, Heine with his quick eye for the weak and ridiculous side of things, would experience considerable difficulty in keeping a straight face amidst all these hosannas and hallelujahs. Finally, Rahel must have made some impression on the recalcitrant heathen, for in 1823 at last, he tells Rahel's brother² that to please Rahel he had now read the whole of Goethe's works with the exception of a few trifles. One of these trifles turned out to be *Werther*! "I like Goethe very much," he continues ("Goethe gefällt mir sehr gut"), which among the hymns of praise of the Berlin worshippers must have sounded like downright blasphemy. The Goethe congregation had little reason to be proud of the latest neophyte.

¹ O. Kanehl, *Der junge Goethe im Urteile des jungen Deutschlands*, pp. 24-32.

² Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, November 27, 1823.

Throughout his life Heine's estimate of Goethe swings from one extreme to another. It changes according to the character of Goethe's attitude towards him and it is strongly influenced by political idiosyncrasies. Besides, while Heine's comments, whether on art, literature, public affairs or persons, are always interesting and stimulating to read, it must be admitted that he was not a critic. Rahel von Varnhagen probably puts her finger on the spot when she says to her husband in 1829: "He is incapable of fundamental criticism because deep down in his heart he lacks seriousness and the highest interest, which alone can give coherence and coherent interest. He thinks that whatever slips off his tongue, whatever he feels like saying, is good enough for anyone."

Until Heine went to Berlin his attitude towards Goethe was probably that of the average German with a flimsy knowledge of Goethe. That as a man of twenty-two, he could in one of his sonnets place Schlegel as a poet in the same class with Goethe, indeed ascribe the awakening of the German muse to the appearance of Schlegel, would seem to show a very immature literary judgment or a complete lack of acquaintance with Goethe's works, probably both. In the *Letters from Berlin* there is the first indication of a jarring note of dissonance which will become more marked as the years go on. He has occasion to speak of the noblest spokesmen of the people who have proclaimed the brotherhood of mankind. Lessing, Herder and Schiller are mentioned, but Goethe's name is omitted. Had the future tribune of the people begun to sense the yawning chasm which separated him from the aristocratic Goethe in politics?

Heine took up a more decided position with regard to Goethe when he attempted to attract Goethe's attention and, if possible, elicit from him a few words of encouragement and appreciation. This was, of course, the ambition of every youthful rhymester of the time. On several occasions Heine sent copies of his poems to Weimar, receiving in return either a curt acknowledgment or nothing at all. Neither the poems nor the poet seem to

have impressed His Excellency. Heine's name is not mentioned in Goethe's conversations nor in his letters, and the solitary entry in the diary with reference to Heine's visit: "Oktober 2. Heine von Göttingen," does not convey the idea that the writer found anything to interest him in the personality of his visitor. As Goethe's literary judgment occasionally went astray, *e.g.*, in the case of Kleist, it is quite possible that he failed to recognize the originality of Heine's verse, or, recognizing it, the very originality may have repelled him. The suggestion of jealousy is the least convincing of all the explanations offered, as it is very doubtful if Goethe, as we know him, could feel the least pang of envy on reading the *Traumbilder*, the first of Heine's poems. In all likelihood, he saw nothing in them but crazy romantic drivel. Whatever the explanation, Heine was naturally hurt, and there was the inevitable unpleasant reaction. It was hard to have written to Goethe¹ that you loved him, that any success you might achieve you owed to him, that you desired to kiss the sacred hand that had shown you and the whole German people the road to the Kingdom of Heaven, and then to receive nothing but a curt acknowledgment of the receipt of poems on which the immortal Schlegel had already set the seal of his approval.

In 1824 Heine visited Goethe in Weimar. We have two accounts of his reception, a humorous report by Heine himself in *Die Romantische Schule*, written in his best poetic manner and therefore far from historic, and a probably true account given by Heine's brother, Maxmilian. According to the latter the interview was as brief as it was formal, and was brought to a somewhat abrupt end by the visitor informing his host that he was planning to write a *Faust*, which Goethe no doubt considered the height of youthful presumption. It is, however, from Heine's own letters that we may infer with certainty that the meeting was disappointing. Soon after the visit, Heine wrote to his friend Moser mentioning at the end of a very long letter, and apparently quite

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, December 29, 1821.

casually, that he had been to Weimar, that the roast goose he got there was very good, also the beer, adding that he would tell him more about the beer at their next meeting. Not a word about Goethe in this letter, but in July 1825 he wrote to the same friend as follows : " If I have not told you about Goethe and our conversation in Weimar and the many amiable and condescending things he said to me you have lost nothing. He is merely the building in which magnificent things used to blossom ; that is the only thing that interested me. It gave rise to a melancholy feeling within me, and I like him better since I pity him. At bottom I and Goethe are two characters bound to repel each other through their heterogeneity." Then follows a passage in which he contrasts Goethe the hedonist (*Lebemensch*), who has never understood life nor lived it, with Heine the fanatic, who, though he has understood life and has lived it, is yet ready to sacrifice it to an idea. He concludes with the question whether such a fanatic does not live in a single moment more fully and happily than Herr von Goethe in the seventy-six years of his egotistical life of comfort. That Heine was at the time not only smarting under the painful memory of the visit to Goethe, but was also just recovering from one of his excruciating headaches and in financial distress, while explaining the acerbity of his judgment, does not of course make it any better sense. The only way to deal with such arrant nonsense is to set against it the refreshingly sane estimate of Goethe's genius Heine gives in a letter to Varnhagen : " With his clear Grecian eyes Goethe sees everything, dark things as well as bright, and nowhere does his mood colour the things he sees ; he portrays men and women in their true outlines, the true colours with which God has clothed them. This is Goethe's merit which future generations only will recognize. We who are, most of us, sick men, are far too firmly rooted in our sickly, discordant, romantic feelings to see instantly how sane, harmonious and plastic Goethe shows himself in his works."

When in the autumn of 1827 Heine learnt that Goethe

had spoken unfavourably of him this provocation naturally led to a recrudescence of Heine's hostility and he wrote to Moser: "That I find no favour with Goethe, the lackey of aristocrats, is natural. His criticism honours me since he praises all that is weak. He is afraid of the rising Titans. He is a weak decrepit God who is vexed because he can no longer create anything."¹ Heine is, as one would expect, more careful and less outspoken in a letter to Varnhagen of the same date. He contents himself with saying that though Goethe may violate the international law of great minds, he cannot prevent his own great name being in future often pronounced together with the name Heine. A month later he seems to have forgotten the injury and voices his indignation at Menzel's attempt to belittle and besmirch the Weimar idol. Speaking of Menzel's *Geschichte der Deutschen Literatur*, he says: "I should not care to have written those passages about Goethe. I, I write against Goethe! When the stars in the heavens become hostile to me should I therefore declare them to be mere will-o'-the-wisp? In any case it is silly to speak against men who are really great." He adds that he must stick to the old pagan because he too is the enemy of a borné nationalism and a shallow pietism.

At a later period when Heine's political opinions colour and confuse his estimate of many of his contemporaries and the measure of every man's worth is his liberalism, he becomes more bitter again against Goethe's absolute sovereignty. Most of this captiousness and acerbity disappears after Goethe's death, and Goethe is only remembered and honoured as one of the Olympians. Heine had at last resigned himself to granting Goethe the right to be Goethe, just as he claimed a right to be Heine. He even becomes almost reconciled to a Goethe, the representative of an art pure and unmixed with other interests such as politics, less modern therefore than his own and grown barren with old age, but which in the past had been the mother of unsurpassed master-

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, Letter to Moser, October 30, 1827.

pieces. In a wonderful passage in the *Romantische Schule*¹ Heine compares the rising generation of poets to a new forest whose trees are only now showing their size since the fall of the venerable oak whose branches had overshadowed them, spreading far beyond them. "There was not wanting an opposition which raged bitterly against Goethe, this great tree. Men of the most opposite views united in such hostility. Those of the old faith, the orthodox, were annoyed because in the trunk of the great tree there was no niche for a saint's image, that in fact the naked dryads of paganism plied their witchcraft around it, and like St Bonafacius they would gladly have cut down the old magic oak with a consecrated axe. Those of the new faith, the adherents of liberalism, were, on the contrary, annoyed because this tree could not be used as a tree of liberty or at least made into a barricade. Indeed the tree was too high: one could not put a red cap on its top nor dance the 'Carmagnole' under it. But the great public revered this tree just because it was so magnificently independent, because it filled the world so sweetly with its perfume, because its branches rose so boldly into the sky that it seemed as if the stars were only the golden fruit of the great wonder-tree."

The variety of Heine's views on Goethe is apt to confuse the reader until he realizes that Heine's criticism is often a matter of moods of the moment, that these moods determine his attitude and may become the raw material for his poetic faculty. About the sincerity of the views he expresses there need be no doubt, but it is equally certain that, in addition, he often yields to the suggestive power of his own words and imagery. As the result of a mutual reaction of mood and expression, Heine, the artist, presents us with a word-picture as lyric as his songs, and ranking not as scientific criticism based on æsthetic principles and calm rational judgments but as art of the most subjective kind in which the actual *Erlebnis* plays an infinitesimally small part.

¹ Elster, *Heines Werke*, vol. v. p. 249.

A striking instance showing the working of Heine's mind is furnished by the incident of the Weimar visit. Heine goes to visit Goethe, is coldly received and fumes and rages over this humiliating set-back. This we find expressed in his letters. Still the first sight of Goethe, even in his old age an extraordinarily impressive figure with his wonderful large eyes, imprinted itself indelibly on Heine's memory, and years after gives rise to the mood swamping every other impression left by that visit, the mood to which we owe the well-known passage in *Die Romantische Schule*.¹

"Goethe's exterior was as deeply impressive as the word which lives in his writings; his form too was harmonious, clear, cheerful, nobly proportioned, and one could study Greek art in him as in an antique. This dignified body was never bent by wormlike Christian humility, the features of his face were never distorted by Christian contrition; these eyes were never evasive like those of a Christian sinner, with their unsteady glance turned heavenward in canting ecstasy. No, his eyes were calm like those of a God. Goethe's eye remained as divine in old age as in his youth. Time could cover his head with snow, but could not bend it. He also held it proudly and highly, and when he spoke he became greater, and when he put forth his hand it was as if he wanted to prescribe to the stars their appointed course. Some people saw about his lips a cold expression of egoism, but this trait too is peculiar to the eternal gods and even the father of the gods, the great Jupiter, with whom I have already compared Goethe. Indeed when I visited him in Weimar and stood before him, I glanced involuntarily to one side, whether there was not the eagle with the lightning in his beak beside him. I was about to address him in Greek, but when I noticed that he understood German I told him in German that the plums on the road between Jena and Weimar tasted delicious. I had during many a winter night reflected what sublime and profound things I would say to Goethe if I ever met him. And when at last I met him I told him that the Saxon plums tasted delicious. And Goethe smiled. He smiled with the same lips with which he had kissed the beautiful Leda, Europa, Danae, Semele and so many other princesses and even common nymphs."

¹ Elster, *Heines Werke*, vol. v. p. 246.

VI

FIRST PUBLICATIONS

THE most important event of the Berlin period was the publication of Heine's poems in book form. The little volume which appeared in December 1821 corresponds to what is given in the *Junge Leiden* of the *Buch der Lieder*. It bore the simple title of *Gedichte* and contained *Traumbilder*, *Lieder*, *Romanzen*, *Sonette* and a few translations from Byron. While many of the poems have no doubt a substratum, no matter how thin, of *Erlebnis*, it would be both futile and ludicrous to search for biographical details beyond the simple facts we already know, and which probably cover all that really happened. What is more interesting is seeing how these facts impress the poet, what moods they give rise to, and how the poet renders them in his verse. Though the theme of most of the pieces seems to be the poet's unhappy love for his cousin, Amalie is not the only woman haunting these pages : quite a number of poems may be credited to another and earlier rapture, Sefchen, the daughter of the hangman of Düsseldorf.

The whole of the love poet Heine is there already, all the gradations of love from the gentlest yearning to an uncontrollable passion culminating in morbid hallucinations. His attitude towards the beloved varies between the resignation of the devout and unselfish worshipper and the vindictive, vicious snarl of the lover jilted by a heartless, unscrupulous jade.

The pessimism which is the most striking feature of the whole volume is by no means all due to the poet's lovelorn condition. The romanticism of the time, utterly at variance with life and reality, turned with bitterness from both and proclaimed the sovereign sway of dreams,

uncontrolled by any standard of reason and reality and often straying into the realm of hallucination. Moreover, years before that the literature of gloom and melancholy had been imported from "merrie England." The first German translation of Young's *Night Thoughts* had been made as early as 1760, and two new translations were published as late as 1825. The work was still extensively read and enjoyed and the popularity of Young's German heirs like the elegiac Hölty was in Heine's time practically undiminished. The example of Byron's "unspeakable sufferings," his bitter invective, his unparalleled passionateness are also much in evidence in the *Gedichte*. This was partly due to conscious mimicry of Byron's characteristics and also to the fact that Heine may be said to have served part of his apprenticeship in poetic expression when he translated portions of Byron into German, had served it so assiduously that in the art of exaggeration the disciple often left his master far behind him. *Warte, warte, wilder Schiffsmann* is a particularly telling instance of this, the very metre betraying the model, Byron's *Farewell*, one of the poems Heine had translated.

The average of the poetic merit of the *Gedichte* rises little above mediocrity, and little judgment is shown in selection and arrangement. We have poems that are perfectly meaningless, like *Die Heimführung*, absurd, like *Das Liedchen von der Reue*, brimful of passionate verbiage, like *Warte, warte, wilder Schiffsmann*, and then again we are dazzled by an imperishable gem like *Die Grenadiere* and *Belsatzar*, entirely free from the erotic element and, coming from the Heine of that time, astonishingly objective. *Die Grenadiere*, not written in his sixteenth year as he informed Saint-René Taillandier many years later, but in his twenty-second, shows that the poet can already rise to the height of his power. None of the other romances in this volume attain to anything like this degree of maturity and objectivity, most of the heroes of the remainder being the mere echo and reflection of the lovelorn poet himself.

Many of the songs owe their charm to the tone and



AMALIE HEINE
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simplicity of expression of the folk-song which had been brought into favour by the Romanticists. Heine has no illusions regarding his success in the imitation of the folk-song ; he knows it is, as a rule, confined to the form only, and he is quite content that it should be so. Nor do we feel this as an incongruity ; on the contrary, we look upon it as one of Heine's greatest achievements that he found it possible to break so thoroughly with the past, discard the severe un-German prosody of his predecessors, and adopt a German form for the expression of German thought and feeling, no matter how modern. As Jordan says : " With Heine the spirit of the German language awoke to the consciousness of its very own rhythmic law."

The *Traumbilder*, the most characteristic portion of the *Gedichte*, contain many borrowed elements. Heine draws liberally on the spectral stock-in-trade of Bürger, Byron and particularly Hoffmann, nor does he forget the eerie paraphernalia of the folk-song, the shudders of the graveyard, dead lovers whose love cannot die, and their midnight meetings in the tomb. The theme is from first to last his love-disappointment. He has not only been spurned by his beloved, but she is marrying another. Pride and vanity are cruelly lacerated, and the realization of his irretrievable loss brings on a paroxysm of rage and jealousy and ungovernable, passionate desire. She had never loved him, so there were no sweet and gentle memories of the past to soften his grief and to restrain his wrathful outbursts. The imagery of reality seemed hopelessly inadequate to express what he felt: frenzied, delirious dreams alone could afford scope and outlet. Nevertheless some of his visions grip the reader like a tale from Hoffmann with the poet's poignant grief super-added. Among the sonnets we have one addressed to Schlegel, the very beautiful ones to his mother, and the *Fresko*-sonnets to Christian Sethe, the latter purely declamatory and wholly unconvincing in their full-mouthed pessimism. The skill he displays in intricate and difficult rhyming would have done credit to a

word-artist like Rückert, but only still further emphasises the artificiality of the feelings expressed.

Heine was not altogether unknown when he published his poems; some of the most striking pieces had already appeared over his signature in Gubitz's *Gesellschafter* and had been enjoyed as something quite original. They were clearly the work of a romantic poet, but there was a great deal more than mere romanticism, there was behind all the romantic extravagance what was so often wanting in the work of other romanticists, a personality, maybe an unpleasant one, but still a personality that imparted an air of realism to the poet's dreams and an artistic unity to his work. With the exception of the mere rhyming exploits of some of the sonnets, everything bore the stamp of sincerity and intense seriousness; and as the facts of the poet's actual love experience were entirely unknown, none of the readers thought of asking the childish and irrelevant question: "Is this a true story?"

The poems were well received on the whole by the literary critics of the day. Varnhagen and Immermann wrote highly appreciative reviews. An unknown critic points out that never in German literature had a poet revealed his whole personality, his inner life, with such surprising indifference to what might be thought of it. Hostile criticism seemed to come mainly from the pen of archaic persons of the moralizing, didactic type, men who looked upon poets as carrying a message from on high. One of them laid down the axiom that "religious elevation was the main aim of all poetry." Consequently the main fault found was the want of moral elevation, and the little volume was represented as consisting of "all the sins against the object of poetry." It was claimed that beauty was there distorted by scorn, love became unholy desire, ardour the fire of hell, etc.

Heine had not the satisfaction of receiving any expression of appreciation or encouragement over the signature of such Olympians as Uhland and Goethe, and his vanity was deeply hurt by their aloofness. Forty free copies

was all the publishers would allow the poet for his work.

Although the financial success of the *Gedichte* held out but slender hope of a speedy deliverance from dependence on his uncle, a second volume of poems followed in the spring of 1823. It contained two tragedies and a series of lyrics called *Intermezzo*, for no better reason than that it was bound between the two tragedies.

Of the tragedies it is not necessary to say much. As stage dramas they are both dismal failures. The plot of the first, *Almanson*, is laid in Granada at the time of the subjugation of the Moors by Ferdinand of Aragon. Almanson, a Mohammedan, returns after an absence of many years to Zuleima, his betrothed, only to find that she has become a Christian. He is about to be persuaded to embrace the same religion, but while Zuleima is hanging on his neck the ringing of the church bells reminds her that, believing Almanson to be dead, she has betrothed herself to another whom she is to marry that very day. In the night the Moors attack the castle, Almanson carries off Zuleima, but unable to escape from his pursuers, he throws himself with his betrothed over a precipice.

Even before the termination of the last act Heine realized that mere happenings are not necessarily dramatic. "A tragedy must be drastic," he writes to his friend Steinmann, two years before the publication, "and that is my own tragedy's sentence of death." Though the first part of the sentence may be somewhat cryptic, the conclusion is clear. The truth is that in spite of the many astonishing incidents, in spite of the dramatic possibilities of the subject, the interest of the play is purely lyric. "I have put myself into this play," he says, "with my paradoxes, my wisdom, my love, my hatred and all my madness."¹ There is, in addition, an utter absence of psychological necessity or even sequence in the acts and words of the characters, who are merely of interest as the reflection of Heine's own feelings. Zuleima, the heroine, is just as colourless as Amalie,

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, October 29, 1820.

Almansor is Heine in Moorish costume. The poet's own disappointment in love stands plainly in the foreground: we have the same ungovernable rage at the faithlessness of the "Schlangenkönigin" as Zuleima is called, the same unmeasured scorn in the portrayal of the successful rival who is a mere jailbird, besides being perfectly idiotic, a mere réchauffé of "der dümmste der dummen Jungen" of the *Amalie* poems.

Of special interest is the religious motive presented by the clash between Christianity, the religion of ascetic other-worldliness, and Mohammedanism, the religion of beauty and life. As Heine began his *Almansor* when he felt no special aversion to Christianity he must have favoured Mahomedanism as a matter of fashion, falling into line with Fouqué, Immermann and Byron in this glorification of the Spanish Moors and the disparagement of their conquerors. It is more than likely that the most virulent fulminations against Christianity were composed in Berlin at the time of the poet's newborn enthusiasm for the Jewish cause and his ever-growing resentment against the oppressors of his race.

The style is very uneven: a great deal of the language is, as Heine himself admits, affected and overladen with Oriental imagery. It is a perfect treasure-trove of hyperbole. Some of the lyric pieces such as Almansor's serenade, "Güldne Sternlein schauen nieder," read like parodies on some of Heine's bold vitalizations of nature in the *Buch der Lieder*.

While *Almansor* was a work of slow and steady preparation and careful working out, *Ratcliff* was written in three days, but was none the better for that. The atmosphere is strongly fatalistic. The parents of the hero and the heroine had been lovers, had parted, married others only to find their first love return, with fatal result to the young man, who was killed by the jealous husband. The son of the one, Ratcliff, and the daughter of the other, Maria, also fall in love with each other and part. In despair Ratcliff becomes a genteel highwayman and swears that he will kill any man who

succeeds in winning Maria's hand. Whenever Maria marries one of the suitors, her husband is challenged by Ratcliff to a duel on the wedding night, which the husband, with reckless gallantry, invariably accepts. The third husband, however, proves too much for the highwayman; he defeats him but spares his life. The result of his ill-timed generosity is, as anyone else would have foreseen, a massacre in the bridal chamber, Ratcliff killing Maria, her father and then himself. The ghostly figures of Maria's mother and Ratcliff's father appear like Grillparzer's Ahnfrau at critical moments during the play, and rush into each other's arms at the end to indicate that the series of murders has come to an end. It is evident that the principal "motif" is not so much the mysterious working of fate as rather the old story of the poet's unhappy love, a "variation of the same little theme," as he regretfully refers to the one-sidedness of his poetry.

Heine who, as a rule, shows fairly sound judgment when speaking of his own works, went far astray on this occasion. When he sent a copy of *Ratcliff* to his friend Christiani, it was accompanied by the lines :

Ich und mein Name werden untergehn
Doch dieses Lied muss ewiglich bestehn.

In a letter to Steinmann he calls the poems of the *Intermezzo* mere trash in comparison with *Ratcliff*, and in a preface written twenty-nine years later, when he republished the play in Paris, he seems still puzzled by the great popularity of the *Intermezzo* and the absolute neglect of *Ratcliff*. By this time the play has in his opinion acquired a political and social significance which we may be sure he had no intention to invest it with when he wrote it, a revolutionary note, the cry of the poor against the luxury of the idle rich. This we hear as a mere *obiter dictum* in one of Ratcliff's speeches, and the same had been heard often before from the lips of every gentleman robber of the eighteenth century, both in actual life and in fiction.

Almansor and *Ratcliff* seem to be all the dramatic work Heine has done. He may have planned other plays but we have nothing tangible to prove it. To ingratiate himself with Goethe, Heine told him that he was writing a *Faust*: that was probably a mere *façon de parler*. Of his plan of a tragedy, the plot of which was laid in Venice, not a line has come down to us. He is supposed to have written a comedy in later life which he burnt for no better reason than that it was turned down by some French theatre or other. As this *auto-da-fé* is supposed to have been carried out at a time when Heine's fame was so solidly established that Campe was ready to publish anything from his pen and pay the ever needy poet hard cash for it, we may be allowed to feel sceptical regarding the life and death of this comedy. It would probably be going too far to say that Heine, if he had persevered in play-writing could not have produced something better, perhaps much better, than *Almansor* and *Ratcliff*, for even these contain individual scenes of undoubted dramatic power, and some of the secondary characters are well drawn. A really great play, however, was probably beyond his powers, as indeed was any work of more ambitious proportions.

After the bad slip of his critical faculty in the matter of *Ratcliff*, we are not surprised to find that Heine considers the *Intermezzo* not worth a pinch of snuff—"Keinen Schuss Pulver werth." The *Intermezzo*, however, really made the poet's reputation and placed him in the front rank of contemporary lyrists. If the biographical substratum is the same as in the *Gedichte* the difference in treatment is fundamental, and, considering that only a few months intervene in the publication of the two, the progress made by the poet is phenomenal. The *Gedichte* bore the unmistakable stamp of immaturity, much was "unreif und unerquicklich," as Heine admitted; the poet was the slave of his grief and the effect was monotonous. The *Intermezzo* shows the finished artist who rises above the raw material of his experience,

which recedes into the background, almost out of sight, thus achieving the poet's independence of what actually happened. In place of the one dominant note of sadness and despair we have in the *Intermezzo* every mood that love calls forth: the joy of its awakening, the rapture of being loved and of the fulness of possession, the torment of doubt, the determination to love *quand même*, gentle resignation alternating with bitter reproaches, the conviction that life has become impossible and the foreshadowing of death. How the poet could, in a letter to his publishers, describe these poems as "ein *Cyclus humoristischer Lieder im Volkston*," is hard to understand.

Most of the threadbare tricks and conventions of the romantic workshop have disappeared. Doubtless we have echoes of the *Gedichte* in the themes of individual songs: there are dreams of tears rolling down the lover's cheek and blood streaming from the wound of his heart and visits of the dead in their graves, but these themes are treated without the crude horrors of a romantic nightmare. These reminiscences of the *Gedichte* add little to the poet's reputation, but there is one exception beginning:

Nacht lag auf meinen Augen,
Blei lag auf meinem Mund,
Mit starrem Hirn und Herzen
Lag ich im Grabesgrund.

This poem with its wonderful simplicity and terseness of expression, the directness of appeal of every stanza, is far and away the most perfect of Heine's dream pictures. Among the other poems the best are those arising from the happy sensations of love. The mood is a new one with Heine, there is nothing like it in the former volume, and it is as welcome as it is new. Tiresome repetitions were beginning to creep into his lyrics of sadness and despair, and the danger of conscious or unconscious imitation of himself was making itself felt, a sure symptom of the sterility, for the time being, of the poet's grief.

Heine has been called "le plus habile arrangeur."

He fully justifies this title in the *Intermezzo*, where the whole of the love material is set out to form a series of connected events and moods from the awakening of love to the poet's death from despair. The plan is carried out with great skill so that most of the poems seem to be necessary links in the chain; each has its own intrinsic value enhanced by its place in the story, and even the weak ones—and there is always a superabundance of them in Heine's verse collections—derive reflected glory from the context. The individual poems are short, and the theme of each is so clearly, briefly and emphatically worked out that the poet has been able to dispense with titles, which in a connected recital in any case have a disturbing effect. Most of the passionate wails of the *Gedichte* have vanished; the expression of suffering is subdued, and the poet's plaint is played on muted strings. The language has that extraordinary musical quality which almost makes one regret that these songs should have been set to music, no matter how beautiful. Not only the poet's rhythmic beauties disappear but the wonderfully delicate emotional shades, one of the main charms of the *Intermezzo*, are swamped by the voice of the singer, not to mention the pianist, and there remains little enough of Heine. The glorious compositions of a Schumann or a Mendelssohn only bring out the main points of an emotional situation, but their music, indeed all music, is too emphatic, almost too gross, when sung, to interpret the wellnigh intangible beauties of Heine's language.

There are a few jarring notes here and there, the most serious being that the poet's beloved is not one woman but several, and that the ethical differences between them are enormous. Amalie is a very shadowy figure in the background of some of the songs, standing out more clearly in "Ich grolle nicht" and some of the most trivial productions of the whole collection, such as "Die Erde war so lange geizig." The beloved in these is the woman with the marble heart who has no favour for the poet, not a pressure of the hand, nor a gleam of promise in the

eye, and who cannot possibly be the same as the much more compassionate Phryne of "Die Welt ist dumm, die Welt ist blind," or "Du bliebest mir treu am längsten." That the beloved should die in No. 31, and that in No. 34 the poet should address a *niaiserie* like "Ach, wenn ich nur der Schemel wär" to the evidently living one is only absurd, while the introduction of the grisette is an offence, not against morals, with which we are not concerned, but against the law of artistic unity. It seems a pity these poems did not later share the fate of some other poems of the original edition of the *Intermezzo* which were omitted from subsequent editions, *e.g.*, "Du sollst mich liebend umschliessen" and "Ich kann es nicht vergessen," and which are now to be found only in the *Nachlese*.

Heine's technique of the folk-song did not differ essentially from that employed by his predecessors, Müller and Tieck. Vocabulary and style were the same.¹ Roses, lilies, nightingales, rubies, diamonds, the sun and the moon are scattered as generously throughout Heine's songs as through theirs or through the folk-song; nor was the animation of nature, the speaking and weeping flowers, the giggling violets and the intelligent, if somewhat supercilious, interest of the stars in human affairs at all new. In this he had not only the models of his predecessors to follow, but was also as a romantic poet bound to come under the influence of Schelling, the romantic poet-philosopher *par excellence*, the author of the *Naturphilosophie*, that "ingenious scholasticizing mixture of profundity and nonsense." It was Schelling who taught the romanticist that nature too had a mind, although one unconscious of itself; that as man had evolved along with nature he had all the knowledge about nature within himself, and if he only went about it the right way there was no need for a laborious plodding upwards along the stony path of empirical science; man could know nature *a priori*; he could know nature as a

¹ H. Greinz and A. W. Fischer deal exhaustively with this question. See Bibliography.

spirit akin to his own, capable of joys and sorrows like himself, a spirit from whom he could expect the sympathy of a brother. Any difficulties of the scheme were bridged over with ease by the sovereign imagination of the romantic poet.

On the other hand, the ruthless boldness with which in many poems Heine has torn away the rosy veil of romanticism and conventional lovemaking to show life with a clearness and truthfulness reminiscent of Goethe, yet of more surprising variety, the daring use he has made of the mould of the folk-song by pouring into it his own modern personality, snapping his fingers at the notion that the form of the folk-song can only be the vehicle of the most artless feelings and the simplest and naïvest thoughts of the man in the street—all this made its appearance in literature with such suddenness that readers might well be forgiven their hesitation in making up their minds as to the meaning and value of it all. Some of this realism was no better than prose, but even so, anything was welcomed as a relief from the nebulous mysticism of the Romantics. "That whoever had nothing to say might as well say it intelligibly, this recognition was the relief Germany owed Heine after the terrible times when whoever was unintelligible had something to say."¹ The yearning for a realism expressed with the greatest possible simplicity and clearness was in everybody's heart. Inasmuch as it meant a breach with old and cherished ways of thinking and feeling, it was nevertheless bound to shock many.

The critics were no less puzzled. Neither the classical nor the romantic standard would fit the innovation, and the more conservative among them disposed of the innovator according to time-honoured usage by labelling him cynical, immoral and irreligious.

The general public realized that, in spite of its place between the tragedies, the lyrics of the *Intermezzo* were really all that mattered in the volume. Whether very many grasped the significance of the new departure in

¹ K. Krans, *Heine und die Folgen*, p. 41.

lyric poetry and, particularly, recognized it as a legitimate change is doubtful. The fact that the *Intermezzo* was not reprinted until it appeared five years later as part of the *Buch der Lieder* does not argue a stupendous degree of popularity. Neither Goethe, nor Uhland, nor Tieck, who had received complimentary copies, thought it worth while sending an acknowledgment, however brief, to the young poet who, during the period of the unfolding of his talent, stood in urgent need of the support and sympathy of men of great achievement.

VII

GÖTTINGEN AND HEILIGENSTADT

VARIOUS reasons induced Heine, in May 1823, to turn his back on Berlin. He had allowed his law studies to drift into shocking neglect, and the numerous distractions of Berlin rendered a resumption of these studies highly improbable. His uncle would certainly prove unwilling to continue paying 400 talers per annum merely to enable his frivolous nephew to write verse, although Heine had lovingly dedicated the "cynical, immoral and irreligious" poems to his uncle, who may or may not have considered this a compliment. No matter whether the poet continued his studies or not he was, in any case, bound first to come to an understanding with his uncle.

While Heine had made a great many friends when he came to Berlin, mainly owing to the good offices of the Varnhagens and their connections, he did not seem to have the faculty of keeping his friends very long. There were good reasons for that. His sarcasm had put on a finer and more deadly edge than ever, and his nervous headaches were making him unbearably irritable. Since he was known as a poet his vanity knew no bounds. He would stroll for hours up and down *Unter den Linden* with the idea that everybody knew him and that people were whispering to each other: "That is the poet Heine!" Moreover, whether as the manifestation of the inferiority complex of a persecuted race or the result of the shocking state of his nerves or of unsatisfied vanity, unmistakable symptoms of a mild form of persecution mania began to appear in his letters. "I can hardly sleep at night now," he says in one of them. "In my dreams I see my so-called friends whispering in each

other's ear little bits of gossip and of scandal which drip like molten lead into my brain. Eternal mistrust dogs my steps during the day; everywhere I hear my name, and behind me resounds mocking laughter."¹ A few months later he was in an even sorrier plight. "I am living here ill, isolated, maligned, unable to enjoy life. I write next door to nothing now. I have hardly any friends here and a band of scoundrels are conspiring in every possible way to ruin me."² It was high time he left Berlin.

His parents, who were now living in Lüneburg, near Hamburg, could, as the result of a business failure, do nothing for their son. They were themselves largely dependent on Salomon Heine's generosity. On his return from Berlin, Heine, the son, was received with due affection by the family, but there was no enthusiasm for the poet. His mother had indeed read the tragedies and the songs without, however, enjoying them particularly; the sister just put up with them, the brothers did not understand them, and the father had not even read them.³ There could be no thought of settling in Lüneburg, especially after Berlin: hardly a soul to speak to, for the orthodox Jews disliked him as a scoffer and the Christians hated the author of *Almansor*, and not without good reason. In the desperately small and unintellectual town Heine's sense of his own importance was increased inordinately, and the imagined far-reaching significance of all his utterances on politics and religion added to the discomforts of his residence there. He looked upon himself as a victim of anti-Semitic hatred, a sufferer in a cause in which he had long ceased to be interested, which did not make his martyrdom any more attractive. When he arrived he was a chronic invalid with few friends, an empty purse and no prospect of any kind. Several visits to Hamburg proved of no avail, for while the uncle showed him marked affability, he declined to be drawn for the present into any further engagements towards his nephew, and the ten *louis d'or*

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, April 14, 1822.

² *Ibid.*, May 1823 (Letter to Moser).

³ *Ibid.*, January 21, 1823.

he gave him for a trip to the seaside for the benefit of his health only added to the poet's embarrassments through its very insufficiency.

Heine visited Hamburg, "the fair cradle of his sorrows," in a Byronic mood partly natural, partly assumed and a matter of affectation. He had been unhappy, his hopes were shattered, his heart was crushed never to heal again. He had dreaded his visit to the spots that had become memorable in the catastrophe of his passion. No doubt his wounds began to bleed again. He writes to Moser in July that the old passion is breaking out again violently, that he ought not to have gone to Hamburg, that gloom and wrath are lying on his soul like a red-hot sheet of iron, that he is yearning for eternal night.¹ Nevertheless, a little more than a month later, he writes to the same friend that he is longing to draw away the curtain from his heart and to confide to him how the new folly has been grafted on the old.² He had met Therese, Amalie's younger sister, at that time barely sixteen years old.

The merit of establishing the fact of this new love beyond all reasonable doubt and thus elucidating the mystery of some of the songs of the *Heimkehr* belongs to the Heine-scholar Elster. His reasons for believing that Therese returned the poet's passion are, however, less convincing. It is quite possible that the mere school-girl was more flattered by the homage of the famous poet than Amalie had been by the attentions of the principal of the bankrupt firm of Harry Heine Co., but beyond this possibility and the fact that Heine did not give up all hope until 1828, when Therese married Dr Halle, we know really nothing regarding Therese's attitude towards her cousin. Heine himself, with characteristic and praiseworthy discretion, never mentioned her name; even his reference to her wedding is extremely guarded;³ all we have is various references to a new love in poems written about this time.

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, July 11, 1823.

² *Ibid.*, August 23, 1823.

³ *Ibid.*, September 15, 1828.

Towards the end of the year the good-natured uncle yielded to his nephew's importunities and undertook to finance another year of academic study. One sometimes wonders whether Salomon Heine was really quite so impervious to the flattery of his nephew's fame, or whether it was not rather the business man's fear of having to pay hard cash for any manifestation of satisfaction, that made him feign his contempt for poets and poetry.

Heine returned to Göttingen and was not sorry to say good-bye to Lüneburg, where "he had divided his time between headaches and jurisprudence."

Göttingen, "das verfluchte langweilige Nest," proved to be an ideal place for carrying out his resolution to terminate his law studies. With the exception of the student duels which he attended assiduously in the capacity of umpire or even of simple spectator, there was absolutely nothing to divert his attention. He had either to work or to die of sheer boredom. It was a relief to be away from the unpleasant Jewish atmosphere of Hamburg and the petty bickerings of both Jews and Christians of Lüneburg. Neither in Hamburg nor in Lüneburg had the prophet enjoyed much honour, whereas Göttingen seemed to have undergone a pleasant change. When Heine left the University in 1823 he was under a cloud and discredited with students and professors, but on returning he found himself treated with respect by his fellow-students and with unwonted benevolence by his teachers, the explanation being that he was now acknowledged to be one of the most promising of the younger poets, whom it was an honour to know.

Heine had never been an idler, and his industry at this period was astounding. Besides cramming his law—it was nothing else—he found time to work on his novel *Der Rabbi von Bacharach*, wrote a great portion of his *Memoiren*, and his best-known prose work, *Die Harzreise*, and all this in spite of his desperate physical condition, the almost uninterrupted torture of his headaches. He spent his academic holidays travelling. In Magdeburg

he made the acquaintance of the poet Immermann, with whom he had been corresponding for some time and who enjoyed the proud distinction of being the only German writer with whom Heine's peculiar temperament allowed him to remain on terms of friendship until the end. In Berlin he visited old friends, making his peace with those with whom he had quarrelled, but he was chiefly engaged in wire-pulling with a view to obtaining a professorship when once he had received his doctor's degree. In this art he was even at that time a past master, often displaying, as on this occasion, an incredible energy in pestering his friends and a cool disregard of accepted standards of etiquette.¹ A walking tour through the Harz Mountains in the autumn of 1824, which ended with the disappointing visit to Goethe, supplied the material for the *Harzreise*.

At last the degree of Doctor juris was conferred on the poet on the 20th of July, 1825. The Dean of the Faculty overwhelmed the candidate with compliments, "as he had proved that it was possible to be a great poet and at the same time a great jurist." The latter part of the compliment, Heine says, inspired him with misgivings regarding the sincerity of the first.

A few months before this, another ceremony took place at Heiligenstadt, his baptism into the Christian faith. This incident is often quoted by Heine's adverse critics as a particularly impressive example of his utter want of principles, and we are expected to be deeply shocked by the levity of his reference to the solemn act in a letter to Moser: "If the law allowed the stealing of silver spoons I should not have been baptized."

The inference drawn by the ordinary reader is that all that happened was that Heine for his personal advancement left the religion of his fathers, declared his belief in the Christian dogmas for which he had no use whatever, and then dismissed the matter from his mind

¹ The letters to Moser of July 20 and 30, and October 30, 1824, show a determined attempt to pick Moser's brains for the purpose of impressing the philologist Bopp with the profundity of his own scholarship.—Hirth, *Briefwechsel*.



THERESE HEINE

Oil Painting, Heine-Asyl, Hamburg

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with a jest. The fact is that the episode is one of the most tragic in the poet's life. That he turned his back on the religion of his fathers need not detain us, for that religion had ceased to have any meaning for him long before the tragic event at Heiligenstadt. That he adopted Christianity lightly is perfectly incredible. He hated all positive religions, and in the course of his studies for the *Rabbi von Bacharach* he had become more intimately acquainted with the discreditable record of the Christian Church and the Christian State in their treatment of the Jews, indeed of all non-Christians, and his hatred had become intensified. Besides, if he became a Christian at all, he had to embrace that particularly unlovely form of Christianity, the Lutheran Prussian State variety, the staunch ally of all monarchical absolutism. The step he took was as inevitable as it was unpleasant. His self-respect urged him to shake off his unworthy financial servitude just as strongly as it bade him remain true to himself. He could not, however, go into business, for which he had already amply demonstrated his total unfitness, and an attempt to get his living by writing poetry in spite of the lamentable unprofitableness of his early efforts would have been little short of insanity. Entering the service of the state to which baptism was the key seemed the only way.

He might, to save his face, have pleaded that ethically there is no difference whatever between a person who, to escape civil disability or overcome professional restrictions, declares concurrence with the Christian faith and the hundreds of thousands of intellectuals who, after being born and baptized in the faith, remain within the pale for precisely the same reasons as Heine's, and are outwardly members of the Church when they have long thrown every one of its dogmas to the winds. It is greatly to Heine's credit that when he had done what hundreds of his Jewish contemporaries were doing without the slightest compunction, he never pleaded the general *sauve qui peut* of his co-religionists nor even the approval of his family as an excuse. On the contrary, he

never ceased to deplore his loss of self-respect, and was more uncompromising in the severity of his condemnation of himself than of other proselytes. Poetically his mood is poignantly expressed in verses originally addressed to another convert to Christianity :

Oh des heil'gen Jugendmutes !
 Oh wie schnell bist du gebändigt !
 Und du hast dich kühlern Blutes
 Mit den lieben Herrn verständigt.

Und du bist zu Kreuz gekrochen,
 Zu dem Kreuz, das du verachtetest,
 Das du noch vor wenig Wochen
 In den Staub zu treten dachtest.

O das tut das viele Lesen,
 Jener Schlegel, Halle, Burke—
 Gestern noch ein Held gewesen,
 Ist man heute schon ein Schurke.

An interesting light is thrown on the incident by an article "Die Taufe des deutschen Aristophanes," which appeared in No. 1 of the *Gartenlaube* of 1877, and is based on the information supplied by Pastor Grimm, who was in charge of the baptismal ceremony at Heiligenstadt. Pastor Grimm and the godfather, or witness, seem both to have been deeply impressed by the earnestness and perfect sincerity of the neophyte. "He did not receive the doctrine as a matter of faith," we are told, "he wanted to be convinced, and the change of faith seemed the result of an inner necessity." Grimm is convinced that the scepticism of Heine in later years was purely superficial and that in his heart of hearts he never lost faith in God. All this is at first sight somewhat disconcerting until we remember that pastors were strictly enjoined by the government to make sure that the candidate had really seen the light and was convinced of the truth of Christianity. Besides, the conduct of the convert at the dinner in the pastor's house was peculiar. There was none of the joy of the sinner who

has found salvation. During the meal, we are told, he spoke as little as possible, his face bore the mark of a deep inner emotion and his dark eyes showed clearly that his mind was roaming far from the subject of the table-talk. The two clergymen present, of whom one had been so deeply impressed by Heine's fervour, were "struck by his silence, and from time to time cast searching glances at him." Were they beginning to doubt the correctness of their first impression?

Heine seems to have kept the secret of his conversion for some time. The first reference we find to the event is in a letter to Moser of the beginning of September, in which there occurs the following significant passage: "As we are speaking of books let me recommend to you Golownin's *Journey to Japan*. You will find there that the Japanese are the most civilized, the most urbane people on the face of the earth. Indeed I might say the most Christian people if I had not read to my astonishment that nothing is so hated and detested by this people as Christianity. I want to become a Japanese. They abominate nothing as they do the cross. I want to become a Japanese."

As the result of this compulsory conversion Heine's hatred of Christianity is increased tenfold. It is only natural that the society which was the staunch ally of this religion should get its due share of this hatred, and that Heine should more and more identify the cause of the Jews with another cause similarly discountenanced at that time by the same religion and society, the cause of democracy. As a key to state employment the painful sacrifice proved absolutely useless.

VIII

RETURN TO HAMBURG

HEINE left Göttingen soon after obtaining his degree. A gift of fifty *louis d'or* from his overjoyed uncle, whose satisfaction was not entirely unselfish, enabled him to bear with ease the period of lassitude and aimlessness which so often follows upon long-deferred achievement. It was only after a sojourn of several months on the island of Norderney that he had seriously to face the problem of the choice of a profession. The shallowness of his legal knowledge, combined with his artistic temperament, would probably in the end have spelled failure in a legal career, and the alternative of a professorship could only have materialized as the result of the energetic advocacy of influential friends, of whom he possessed but few.

Heine's ambition with regard to a professorship was by no means so ridiculous as some critics would have us believe. Mücke shows in his *Heines Beziehungen zum deutschen Mittelalter* that though he might have made a poor professor of Germanics, a professorship of modern German literature ought not to have been beyond him at that time. It is only comparatively recently that German universities have begun to appoint their professors exclusively from the ranks of trained specialists. Formerly it was often sufficient to have achieved distinction as a writer on almost anything to receive an academic appointment. Schiller had probably never heard a lecture on history in his life, but was nevertheless appointed professor of history at Jena, and Wieland, whose training in philosophy was only slightly superior to that of Schiller in history, was in recognition of the merit of his tales and novels called to the chair of phil-

osophy at Erfurt. In any case, could anyone, after reading Heine's *Romantische Schule*, doubt for a moment that he would have made a more interesting and inspiring teacher of literature than at least half the professors duly appointed according to modern academic standards.

The practice of law in Hamburg looked at first very attractive, for he was not without hope that his pretty cousin Therese would prove less obdurate than her elder sister and that, provided he settled in Hamburg, her parents might become reconciled to such a union. We do not know why, soon after his arrival, he suddenly gave up his legal ambitions, nor do we know much of the course of his new love beyond the suppositions, often far from convincing, of biographers. The variableness of Heine's moods, even his talk of suicide, are just as likely to be due to his headaches, his financial straits, the hostile atmosphere surrounding him, both Jewish and Christian, the barrenness at the time of his Muse as to the trials of his courtship of Therese.

The outstanding event of the retired and rather aimless life he was leading alternately in Lüneburg and Hamburg was his acquaintance with Julius Campe, who was to publish the first instalment of his *Reisebilder*, and henceforth remained the sole publisher of his works. Beyond this, the whole of this period, from the autumn of 1825 until April 1827, was one of irritation and depression such as would have severely tried a much stronger character than Heine's. He was approaching the completion of his thirtieth year and seemed to be as far from financial independence as he had ever been. The niggardly Campe's payment of fifty *louis d'or* for the first volume of the *Reisebilder* held out little hope of speedy realization of his dream. The inevitable sponging on his impecunious parents whenever he lived in Lüneburg was painfully humiliating. Even his vanity forsook him and he took little pride in what he accomplished. When he published the *Reisebilder*, he had not even the satisfaction of knowing that he had written anything wonderful. He apologized to Varnhagen for

publishing the book at all, convinced that it would add very little to his fame. Yet this volume contained the eighty-eight songs of the *Heimkehr*, the *Harzreise*, and the *Nordsee*, three of the best-known works of Heine's genius.

To anyone coming fresh from the reading of the *Intermezzo* the *Heimkehr* must be somewhat disappointing. In artistic arrangement of the poetic matter it cannot compare with its predecessor. The very title is misleading. Of the eighty-eight poems only about a dozen come strictly under that heading. These clearly belong to the Amalie cycle. For the confusion of the uninitiated there are scattered throughout the collection the songs of the Therese cycle, the theme of which is the awakening of the poet to a new love which also ends in despair, a new love proving distinctly less inspiring than the old. The unity, and often also the freshness of the *Intermezzo*, are wanting. We have a repetition of the poet's former moods and phases: the Heine of the *Traumbilder*, Heine as Byron, Heine the hater of Christianity, and Heine the hero of ephemeral and often uninteresting amours. It is manifest that the old theme of the broken heart is played out. The poet was by no means unaware of this. "I cannot tell of my own sufferings," he confesses already in 1823,¹ "without the matter becoming comical." Just as irresistible was his conviction that his readers, too, had good reason to get tired of the everlasting theme of his unhappy love. Hence the well-known lines :

Teurer Freund : Was soll es nützen,
Stets das alte Lied zu leiern ?
Willst du ewig brütend sitzen
Auf den alten Liebes-Eiern ?

The situation was even more serious : he had an eerie feeling that he had come to the end of his lyric power. "I suppose that I am finished as a lyric poet," he wrote to Müller.² That this was not quite groundless even a

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, November 28, 1823.

² *Ibid.*, Juni 7, 1826.

superficial reader of the *Heimkehr* can see at a glance. It was the inevitable consequence and symptom of an ever-encroaching realism which is slowly ousting the romantic element which had reigned supreme in the poet's *Traumbilder*. The process is an interesting one to watch. We have only to read the songs of the *Junge Leiden*, where the poet's personality obtrudes itself in almost every line, and then turn to No. 3 of the *Heimkehr* ("Mein Herz, mein Herz, ist traurig"), where that personality is relegated to the first and the last stanzas, the rest being purely descriptive and objective realism rendered in language verging on prose. The process is complete in such poems as "Das ist ein schlechtes Wetter" (No. 29) and "Dämmernd liegt der Sommerabend" (No. 85). We have the feeling that the poet has at last learnt to see other things : not himself solely.

The worst defect of the *Heimkehr* is of course not that the poet has forfeited for the moment the title of "le plus habile arrangeur" he had so richly earned with the *Intermezzo* nor the amazingly perplexing versatility of his passionate heart, dying at one moment for the old love, then dying for the new besides seeking consolation in numerous erotic experiences of a lighter and more transitory kind. The worst blemish is that the whole collection is such a desperate medley of good, bad and indifferent. Beside the gems like "Du bist wie eine Blume," "Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht," or the Goethean "Herz, mein Herz sei nicht beklommen," or the superb "Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar," we have an inordinate amount of rubbish. To speak as Bölsche does¹ of "the constant stream of power running through the eighty-eight songs everywhere unmistakable and everywhere admirable," is quite a feat of eulogistic criticism. One of Heine's most intimate friends, Immermann, showed more discrimination by confessing frankly that the Heine of the *Heimkehr* was no longer master of his material ("nicht mehr über seinem Stoff stehe"); indeed, that this material often failed to become poetry

¹ Bölsche, *Heinrich Heine*, p. 64.

in his hands. Other critics have judged the *Heimkehr* more severely, charging the poet with insincerity and posing. Probably Heine could hardly help being artificial and, to that extent, insincere in this transition phase of his talent. The traditions he had himself created, and the manner to which he owed his fame, had to such an extent become second nature with him that he found it difficult to free himself from what had hitherto served as an anchor but had now become a mere shackle. Besides, insincerity which the artist recognizes and confesses so frankly is surely the most venial form of that vice.

Heine had amply demonstrated in the songs of the *Heimkehr* that the old springs were beginning to run dry and even that the old form of the four-lined stanza had become purely conventional. It was as the result of its very freedom which once was its chief glory in danger of becoming indistinguishable from prose. But before the lyric poet took leave of his readers for many years to come, he rose once more out of the mediocrity which threatened to engulf him and gave them one of the most dazzling manifestations of the versatility of his genius in the *Nordseebilder*.

Heine's love of the sea had been a case of love at first sight. "I love it as my own soul," he wrote, "and I often feel as if the sea must be my soul." Here at last was a love in which he need not be afraid of being cut out by a rival, for the Germans had hardly become cognizant yet of the very existence of the sea as a source of poetic feeling. A hundred years before Heine, Brockes had bored readers of his verse with a detailed enumeration of shells and fishes, going into raptures over the utility of the mighty ocean, the wisdom and kindness of the Creator, "that universal cook," who knew that the Hamburgers, and especially Brockes, liked fish, and therefore provided it in great quantity and infinite variety. The beauty of the sea was not entirely overlooked but was served up merely as a *hors d'œuvre*. Goethe seems to have been almost totally seablind if we are to judge

by his disappointing references to the Mediterranean in his *Italienische Reise*, and the romanticists saw the sea through a haze of symbolism.

Nothing is more characteristic of Heine than his treatment of this theme. He sings the glories and the stupendous grandeur of the ocean, but he is not afraid of speaking also of its more trivial aspects ; of the cold you are apt to catch when walking along the strand on a windy night and the unpleasant stomachic reaction of the violent motion of the ship. He lives with the sea as with a friend whom he profoundly admires, but with whose unpleasant shortcomings he is perfectly familiar and who does not object to become occasionally the mere picturesque background for the display of the poet's own soul. The whole is an extraordinary mixture of grave and gay, of joy and despair, of pungent wit and the quaintest of humour, of emotional rapture and profound reflections ; yet all so perfectly blended as to make the individual poems with few exceptions, such as "Nachts in der Kajüte," into works of art of unsurpassed excellence.

As his feet are set on the solid ground of reality his imagination rarely roams wild and uncontrolled as in his earlier poems, or when it has soared high into the regions of illusion it will at the end return to the reality of things. In one of the grandest of the poems, for instance, *Die Götter Griechenlands*, he sees the clouds of the evening sky assume the appearance of the gods of Hellas, Jupiter and Juno, and Aphrodite, and Apollo, and Hephæstus, the mere pitiful shadows of their former selves. The poet had never loved them, for they had always been on the side of the victor, but when he remembers how they have been dethroned by the new dreary gods clad in the sheepskin of humility, his anger rises and he tells the old gods that his heart is with them, with the vanquished, and he continues :

Also sprach ich, und sichtbar erröteten
Droben die blassen Wolkengestalten,
Und schauten mich an wie Sterbende,
Schmerzenverklärt, und schwanden plötzlich.

Der Mond verbarg sich eben
 Hinter Gewölk, das dunkler heranzog ;
 Hoch aufrauschte das Meer,
 Und siegreich träten hervor am Himmel
 Die ewigen Sterne.

The manner in which this realism manifests itself has not always been duly appreciated by critics who often ascribed to romantic irony, which arbitrarily plays with and destroys the artist's own creation, or to Heine's "purely negative and purely disintegrating semitic character," what should be put down to this perfectly legitimate new tendency. A well-known instance is *Seegespenst*, in which the poet looks down to the bottom of the ocean and sees an old city and at one of its windows his long-lost beloved whom he addresses in impassioned language and into whose arms he attempts to throw himself. He is saved at the last moment by the captain, who drags the romantic dreamer back by the foot and asks him if he has taken leave of his senses. This is generally called the "moralische Ohrfeige," which ruthlessly destroys the poet's beautiful vision, an act of wanton destruction merely meant to tickle the jaded palate of decadent romanticists. Probably realizing that some of his more obtuse readers might thank him for a further elucidation of what is really quite plain already Heine has *Seegespenst* followed immediately by *Reinigung*, beginning with unmistakable clearness of meaning :

Bleib du in deiner Meerestiefe,
 Wahnsinniger Traum,
 Der du einst so manche Nacht
 Mein Herz mit falschem Glück gequält hast,
 Und jetzt als Seegespenst
 Sogar am hellen Tag mich bedrohest.

and ending with the equally clear and magnificent lines :

Hoiho ! Hoiho ! da kommt der Wind !
 Die Segel auf ! Sie flattern und schwell'n !
 Über die still verderbliche Fläche
 Eilet das Schiff,
 Und es jauchzt die befreite Seele.

The meaning is obvious enough. *Seegespenst* expresses the poet's determination to bury the romantic past and to free his soul from his old love, which had outlived its sentimental value and had become a mere dream-haunting spectre.

That Heine does at times destroy his own work is of course undeniable, e.g., in *Frieden* where the effect of the ecstatic vision of Christ in the first part is demolished in the second when the poet goes out of his way to administer a grotesque castigation to some unknown person in whom we are not in the least interested. Heine realized the enormity of the outrage, and in later editions dropped the offensive passage, which is now relegated to the notes in Elster's edition. Years after the publication of the *Nordseebilder* Heine confessed to Fanny Lewald¹: "All such shrill dissonances arose from a decided feeling of antagonism to the hyper-sentimental effeminacy of the Swabian poets and their associates."

The form of these *Nordseebilder* is as interesting as the matter, an irregular blank verse with a varying number of verse accents often emphasized by a very effective use of alliteration. Already in his favourite four-lined stanza of the earlier poems he had broken with the traditions of metrical symmetry and purity of rhyme, now he realized that even with the modifications he had introduced after the model of the *Volkslied* this stanza would be no better than a straight waistcoat for the surprisingly new order of ideas which surged tumultuously through heart and brain with changes of thought as sudden as the changes of rhythm of a Hungarian dance. Before him Goethe had performed wonders in the adaptation of rhythm to thought, but he had rarely ventured outside the strictly defined limits of classical prosody. It required a man like Heine, completely devoid of reverence for accepted standards, to give us this perfect and convincing harmony of thought and form, so convincing

¹ Fanny Lewald, *Erinnerungen an Heinrich Heine in Zwölf Bilder nach dem Leben*.

that in reading these poems we almost have the impression that the same ideas could not possibly have been expressed in any other form. No detailed or even general scheme of the metre can be attempted beyond what has already been given, it seems to defy the scalpel of the metrical dissector. It adapts itself as smoothly to the ecstasy of *Frieden* as to the inimitable rollicking humour of *Im Hafen*, that most perfect example of Germany's "feucht-fröhliche Poesie."

IX

TRAVEL PICTURES

CRITICS lost their bearings over the *Nordseebilder*, which absolutely refused to be classified according to time-honoured criteria as subjective, objective, romantic, realistic, sentimental or reflective, for these poems contained all these elements, blended as only Heine dared blend them, with his shocking disregard for tradition and literary decorum. The *Harzreise* produced a similar impression on them, although the unsophisticated general public immediately surrendered to the charm of a prose which had so evidently passed through the heart of a poet. It is interesting to note by the way that there appeared in the same year another work in delightful poetic prose by another pen, Eichendorff's *Taugenichts*, and that both have remained in high favour with German readers. But while Eichendorff's *Taugenichts* was a purely poetic tale drawn from the poet's imagination and steeped in the most lovable form of romanticism, the work of the more progressive Heine bears the unmistakable mark of a transition period. Such a period, to all but the greatest artists, is apt to be a time of uncertainty of aim and of barren conflict. The old is becoming effete, the new presents itself in all its initial crudity, and where a blending of the two is attempted it is likely to result in a work of purely ephemeral interest or in downright failure. Heine, however, has succeeded in combining the romanticism of which Eichendorff was the last uncompromising champion with the perfectly antagonistic realism which was shortly to usurp the place of romanticism. Romanticism and realism do not here appear as oppositional elements but go hand in hand. While Heine may be said to have thereby created a new

genre, naturally enough the *Harzreise* has remained the only specimen of the kind, for none but Heine could write another.

The description of the places visited is the writer's least concern, indeed the only serious attempt at description is made in the case of the city of Goslar ; yet even in that portion of the book the most striking thing is not the graphic account of the old city's buildings and monuments, but the interludes set in the frame of the topical description ; the meeting with the native of Quedlinburg, the quaint reflections on immortality, and the dream in which the ghost of the rationalist, Dr Saul Ascher, appears to Heine at midnight for the purpose of proving that there are no ghosts. Wherever the poet takes us, down the mines of Klaustal or to the noisy students' carouse on the top of the Brocken, he offers us a perfect riot of often profound reflections, amusing episodes, poetic descriptions of nature, spirited attacks on philistinism, irreverent thrusts at all that is antiquated in religion, philosophy and politics. Everything is apparently presented just as it flashed through the writer's head at the moment with every mark of freshness and spontaneity, yet in reality wrought with elaborate care and set in its proper place and the whole arranged with consummate art. Heine has rarely shown himself in so lovable a mood, even his wittiest and most effective shafts are sped on their way with a smile and not one of them is poison-tipped.

The quaint romantic features so attractive to the modern reader must have appealed less to the poet's contemporaries, whose daily bread was romanticism. On the other hand, the iconoclastic flashes with regard to religious and political questions which we look upon as harmless may have looked extremely bold and shockingly impudent to some. But even making every possible allowance for this difference of standpoint and the relativity of political boldness we still fail to perceive signs of a real political awakening on the part of Heine. At this time Metternich's police régime defied every

principle of political decency, filled the prisons with suspected demagogues, and kept them there indefinitely without trial. Frederick William sat on his throne infallible and unmoved by reminders of his broken promises. One might imagine that in a book published in Hamburg, which was outside the Prussian sphere of influence, bolder things might have been said than that the ancestors of the Prussian nobility were privileged birds of prey, that we live in portentous times in which cathedrals a thousand years old are demolished and imperial thrones are cast into the lumber-room, or that the author has his heart on the left, the liberal side. Heine will not wake up until the political situation touches him personally.

The sign of the transition period is seen most clearly in the nature descriptions which are now romantic to the verge of affectation, and then again so impressive and convincing in their objectivity as to place them on a level with Goethe's best descriptive work. The following passage¹ is a particularly striking instance of this.

"Most entrancingly the golden rays of the sun flashed through the dense green of the firs. Roots of trees formed a natural stairway. Everywhere benches of the loveliest swelling mosses, which cover the stones foot-deep, as with bright green velvet cushions. Refreshing coolness and the dreamy murmur of waters. Here and there one sees the silvery clearness of water rippling among the stones, laving the bared roots and the fibres of trees. If one bends down over this movement one seems to harken to the secret story of plant-life and the calm heart-beats of the mountain. In many places the water spurts more strongly from among the stones and roots, and falls in little cascades. How soothing it is to sit here. There is a wondrous murmuring and rustling: the birds sing their broken strains of yearning: the trees whisper as with the tongues of a thousand maidens: the strange little mountain flowers gaze upon us and stretch out to us their broad queerly-cut leaves: the merry sunbeams dart playfully about: the wise little herbs tell their green fairy-tales and all lies enchanted, ever and ever more mysterious . . . an age-old dream becomes real, the beloved appears . . . alas . . . that she so quickly vanishes!"

¹ Elster, *Heines Werke*, vol. iii. p. 51.

“La matière était humble,” says Legras, “le Brocken est une montagne banale.” This is true, but we may be sure that a region even less imposing than the Harz would have served equally well as a starting-point for the poet’s fancy. We have already seen how little *Erlebnis* Heine requires, and judging by the instance given by Dörne¹ we may well imagine to what slender incidents we owe some of the most striking episodes. There is a great deal more Heine than Harz in the *Harzreise*.

In the summer of 1827 Heine, encouraged by the success of the *Harzreise*, published a second instalment of *Reisebilder*, the volume containing what is generally called *Norderney*, *Das Buch Le Grand*, and *Briefe aus Berlin*. The *Berlin Letters* were now published in book form, literally as a makeweight, as books over a certain size had not to be submitted to the censor before publication. This was a dubious advantage to author and publisher, as such books might be confiscated later if they contained anything that hurt the susceptibilities of the government. Once already Heine had had a taste of Prussian censorship. During the Berlin period he had spent a few weeks in Poland and had shortly after published his impressions in the *Gesellschafter*. Between the editor’s ideas of what the articles should contain and the censor’s ideas of what they should not contain, they were so severely mutilated that there was little left to show the author’s awakening interest in public questions and a leaning of his political opinions towards the left.

Norderney differs fundamentally in conception from the *Harzreise*. In the latter, if the journey itself often plays a secondary part, it is at least never entirely lost sight of, but *Norderney* might, with the exception of about seven or eight pages, have been written though Heine had never been near the place. There are a few characteristic and charming pages about the sea and the inhabitants of the island. The main interest, however, centres, or rather centred at the time, in the reflections

¹ Houben, *Gespräche mit Heine*, p. 87.

on religion, the nobility, Goethe and Napoleon. Heine may often pride himself on his rôle of liberal politician or prophet or even martyr, but he is far from being a politician in reality. He is always, first and last, the artist, and whenever he gets himself into trouble with the authorities, it is not by what he says but by the manner in which he says it. Hundreds of writers had declared before that Roman Catholicism was the expression of a perfectly medieval mode of thought, that the nobility were a pack of parasites, and that Napoleon was the man of the people, and yet no one ever hurt them for saying so. But Heine had a way of picturing Catholicism as a gigantic spider sitting in the centre of his cunningly woven web at Rome; he could hold up to ridicule the hopeless inanity of the young Hanoverian nobles, and elaborate the apotheosis of the colossal Napoleon until all the princes and princelets of Germany appeared, without having ever been mentioned, as so many contemptible specks of dust. All this sounded so refreshingly impertinent, so amusingly blasphemous, that the critics were almost afraid to confess that they had enjoyed reading it, and some were even too frightened to review the book at all. It is satisfactory to learn that the governments of Prussia and Austria felt sufficiently hurt to forbid the sale of the volume.

Nevertheless Heine was not by nature the demagogue the government took him for. He was not a man of concerted action, and he would have been a failure even as a member of a liberal party, if such a thing had existed at a time when men of progressive ideas in Germany were still far from realizing the advantages of party organization and contented themselves with aimless tilting of lances like so many knights-errant. Although the political situation in Germany was hopelessly depressing and aroused the wrath of many of the most cultured and thoughtful patriots, it is probably not so much a conviction of the need of the hour that made Heine break an occasional lance for liberalism, it is the result rather of a state of morbid irritation arising from a number of

causes. The situation was no more desperate than it was when he wrote the *Harzreise*, only at that time his temper had not been ruffled by Therese, nor by ever-increasing uncertainty regarding his future, nor by the innumerable pin-pricks to which his baptism exposed him. Hence the lovable Heine of the *Harzreise* is in *Norderney* represented by a dozen paragraphs at most.

In his choice of allies in the cause of liberalism Heine showed little discrimination and, it must be admitted, cast his net pretty wide. In the despotic Napoleon he saw the champion of a few of the leading ideas of the Revolution ; that was enough to enrol him. He claimed the conservative Goethe at this period for no better reason than that Goethe was disliked by the Hanoverian nobles on account of his want of religion, and, at a later period he saw in the autocratic, militaristic and bigoted Russian emperor, Nicholas, a protagonist of modern political ideals, because he had protected Greek widows and orphans from the Turks. It is perfectly obvious that Heine had at that time not even begun to pursue consecutively any train of political thought, that politically he was living from hand to mouth, and that what liberalism he manifested was of a purely literary or even poetical type, determined by moods and other fortuitous causes.

Nowhere is the warning that Heine writes neither biography nor history more opportune than with regard to his *Buch Le Grand*. The "facts" are mostly legendary, and the treatment is romantic. The drummer Le Grand is fiction, so is the Napoleon that is portrayed in the book, also the love story, the author's own personality, and a great deal of what he tells us of the time he spent in the Düsseldorf Lyceum. The whole is really a prose poem, and the language is mainly poetic and often exquisitely rhythmical.

The work begins with a return of his old love, the story of which is related to a lady he calls Elvina. Then follows what is one of the best known portions of Heine's prose : the story of his youth at Düsseldorf, of the French

occupation, the visit of Napoleon, and the friendship with Le Grand, the drummer. After a number of chapters impossible to analyse owing to the bewildering number of subjects touched upon, the poet ends as he began with the story of his love.

The whole makes most entertaining reading for anyone whose mind is not a card-index incapable of accommodating any hitherto unclassified form of literature. It contains, however, incredibly weak portions, like a great many of Heine's works. What he says about his unhappy love is sometimes mere patter, sometimes witty and amusing, and far too often so strained as to become unbearably irritating. Proelss, in his attempt to classify the work, calls it a "satirico-poetical phantasia or capriccio." Some chapters remind Boelsche of "the irresponsible talk of a clever man who has imbibed a generous quantity of champagne and now writes without rhyme or reason." Elster and Wolff look upon the *Buch Le Grand* as an apologia addressed to Therese with the object of showing her what a devilishly clever man she lost when she spurned him. It is, however, hard to believe that a man of Heine's sense of humour could really imagine that Therese or any other woman would be impressed, not to say won, by the meaningless display of pedantic learning in Chapter XIII. Such portions were probably composed for his own amusement, perhaps also because, by sense or nonsense, the manuscript had to make up a volume of twenty sheets, so as to bring it within the regulations of the censorship.

Heine's famous apotheosis of Napoleon in the *Buch Le Grand* and in other works has often been misrepresented and a charge of want of patriotism has been based on such passages. A glance at the evolution of Heine's attitude towards Napoleon will show that it was really eminently national throughout. That the fifteen-year-old schoolboy should blindly worship the first great man he ever set eyes on in Düsseldorf is only to be expected. This phase of blind worship continues for quite a number of years in a German environment by no means hostile

to Napoleon, the sworn enemy of the feudal system, of religious inequality and of many other worn-out beliefs and institutions. The stupidly reactionary governments of Germany had only themselves to thank for this state of things. The return of the exile from Elba and his proclamation of constitutional government endeared him still more to his German partisans. Princess Waldburg-Truchsess, a born Hohenzollern and the wife of the Prussian ambassador at Turin, could speak of Napoleon as her "dear, beloved emperor," and of the battle of Waterloo as a day of mourning. The death of the "martyr" at St Helena in 1821 gave fresh impetus to what almost amounted to a canonization of the dead martyr. Heine felt particularly drawn to him by the circumstance that like Napoleon, the man of the people, he was at heart an aristocrat. Heine, the descendant of a despised race and compelled to make the cause of the people his own, was also by nature a strong individualist and an inveterate aristocrat, who hated nothing more than contact with the crowd; he was as he has been called, "ein pöbelscheuer Aristokrat."

So far the object of Heine's admiration had been one and undivided, but at the time of his journey to Italy he began to distinguish sharply between Napoleon the genius, the man of thought, and Napoleon the man of action, and it is instructive to compare the dithyrambs of the *Buch Le Grand* with the sober judgment expressed by the visitor to the battlefield of Marengo, who confesses that he loved Napoleon unconditionally only up to the eighteenth Brumaire, when from a secret predilection for aristocracy and not from necessity Napoleon betrayed liberty.¹ For this betrayal of his mother, the Revolution, he had afterwards to do penance and die a martyr's death in St Helena.² The process of the decanonization of the saint has begun. Henceforth his interest in Napoleon grows perceptibly weaker. Under the influence of Saint-Simonian ideas he refers to Napoleon as a Saint-Simonian emperor because he had

¹ Elster, *Heines Werke*, vol. iii. p. 273.

² *Ibid.*, vol. v. p. 195.

replaced the old régime of aristocratic heredity by the new régime of talent and capacity. In the *Romantische Schule* Napoleon became even more of an abstraction. There he is called "the Fichte of action, the great inexorable Ego, with whom thought and action are identical; the representative of colossal will, but at the same time a warning example of the ephemeral effect of unbounded will." The only use he can see for the Colonne Vendôme, made of the metal of 1200 conquered cannon and topped by the statue of Napoleon, is as a lightning-conductor for heroism which should cure ambitious soldiers of all desire for glory. The lowest point is reached when, in 1840, Napoleon's body is brought to France, and Heine confesses that the fact that Napoleon is dead is what he likes best in him.

X

TRAVELS IN ENGLAND AND ITALY

ON the day on which the second volume of the *Reisebilder* appeared Heine took ship to London, "just to get away from Hamburg," he says in one place, "for prudential reasons," as he confesses elsewhere. He was no doubt profoundly impressed with the stupendous importance and the far-reaching revolutionary character of his utterances and feared reprisals on his person on the part of the government. Probably his person was safe enough in view of the fact that there were not enough prisons in Germany to lock up all the liberals who had expressed pretty much the same opinions. If the circulation of this instalment of the *Reisebilder* was immediately forbidden, there was very little harm done. The author could safely leave his interests in the hands of his publishing firm, which was splendidly organized for smuggling forbidden literature into hostile territory. The prohibition only stimulated the curiosity of the reading public, though, as Moser remarked, "there was no need to prohibit the sale of the book, as it would have been widely read anyhow." A strong reason for visiting England may have been the desire to see the country, which was at that time the only home of free speech in Europe, to which a writer who looked upon himself as a prominent liberal might very naturally wish to undertake a pilgrimage.

Salomon Heine, with a perfectly childlike trust in human nature, had rashly given his nephew a letter of credit for £400 merely as an introduction to Rothschild in London, and not be to used otherwise except in case of urgent necessity. The first thing Heine did on arriving in London was to cash this letter to the

profound and not altogether unreasonable disgust of his uncle. Heine used the amount not only to have a good time, but also in an unexpectedly businesslike manner. He liquidated some old debts he had contracted in Germany and deposited with Varnhagen a reserve fund of 800 talers towards a day of need. This made matters no better for the uncle, though posterity may be pardoned for regarding this flagrant misuse of funds with mixed feelings of moral indignation and æsthetic satisfaction. For this nest-egg later enabled Heine to go to Italy, and to this journey we owe his *Italien*.

On the whole, the stay in England, which lasted from the middle of April to the beginning of August, was barren and disappointing and far from proving a fresh source of inspiration. The only English society he got to know was the narrow-minded insular bourgeoisie which found its most characteristic self-expression in the unspeakable English Sunday. English political institutions and the English predilection for compromise he judged by the standard of French revolutionary ideas and inexorable logical methods, and as a result saw little sense in them. The unpleasant climate, which frequently kept him indoors, the wellnigh insuperable difficulties of the language, and the want of all preliminary study of English life, customs and history, added to the shortness of the sojourn, made the intellectual result of the visit a foregone conclusion. How little he really learnt is shown by his assurance to E. Wedekind¹ on his return that he found English life and customs to be exactly as he had described them in *Ratcliff*!

If we may be allowed to judge by the few letters we have of that time, he was, while in England, far more interested in what people in Germany thought of his book, and in the probable fate of its author when once he ventured back to Germany, than in the study of English affairs. Anyhow politics had at last touched him personally, and he began to view with

¹ Houben, *Gespräche*, p. 113.

complacency the possibility of figuring as a leader of liberal thought.

On his return to Hamburg Heine immediately took in hand the publication of the *Buch der Lieder*, which was to contain most of the verse he had written so far. It was to be a "virtuous edition," as he said, which meant that some of the more sensuous pieces were to be eliminated. By a curious coincidence he saw Amalie again for the first time in many years on the very day on which the *Buch der Lieder*, "the coffin of his sufferings," was put on sale. The few remarks he makes on the subject of this meeting seem to show that his "grande passion" was completely burnt out, and as his affair with Therese held out every prospect of going very speedily the same way, he had, with the exception of a little amourette with a pretty actress, Therese Peche, no heartstrings to tie him to Hamburg any longer. So he accepted the proposal of the South German publisher Cotta that he should become joint-editor with Dr Lindner of the *Neue allgemeine politische Annalen* in Munich.

He travelled in a most leisurely manner, spending about a month on the trip. He met Börne in Frankfort, and had the supreme satisfaction of undergoing a painless form of martyrdom for his political convictions when, on entering the territory of Württemberg during an excursion, he was met by a policeman who charged him with the crime of being Dr Heine, arrested him, and ordered him to leave the sacred soil of Württemberg without delay.¹ His visit to Börne was a satisfaction to both. Börne did most of the talking, and Heine seems to have been on his guard not to offend the sensitive little man who could be so unpleasantly sarcastic. There was not a jarring note to give even the faintest indication of the deadly enmity which was so soon to arise between them, and become the literary *cause célèbre* of the day.²

That Cotta should put Heine at the head of the

¹ Vincenz von Zuccalmaglio in Houben, *Gespräche*, p. 120.

² A detailed account of the meeting is given by Heine in his book on Börne.

leading political journal of Southern Germany and that Heine should accept an appointment carrying with it enormous responsibilities seems to show uncommon optimism on both sides. Cotta, however, probably asked for nothing more than a great name at the head of his enterprise, and considered this a sufficient return for the extraordinarily liberal salary of 2000 florins for a period of six months. He must have known, as indeed Heine did and openly confessed, that Heine had no knowledge or understanding of the complicated German state systems nor any insight into economic problems, and that he would, therefore, be reduced to ringing the changes on the stupidity and the greed of clergy and nobility and a vague and declamatory emancipation of mankind. When Heine wrote to Varnhagen that his duties were not likely to cause him much worry this may be due partly to conceit and partly to a disdainful determination not to allow the editorship to worry him. There is little doubt that from the very first he meant to use his office as a stepping-stone to more desirable things quite regardless of the interests of the *Annalen*, regardless also of the trust reposed in him by the proprietor, and without any thought even of consistency and self-respect. When in later life Heine calls himself "the sword that fought in the front rank and the light that illumined the darkness," it was certainly not as editor of the *Annalen* that he earned such a title. That he had nothing of the martyr in his make-up would have excused prudence and moderation in his own contributions, but he went far beyond any such venial self-restraint.

Among the three or four articles from his pen was a review of Michael Beer's drama *Struensee*, which in his private letters he had pronounced to be trash, but praised in the *Annalen*, because the poet was the intimate friend of Schenk, the Bavarian Minister of the Interior. If this is no more than many a professional journalist may have to descend to occasionally the next instance of his opportunism is more serious. Among his

associates was a low-bred, notoriously mephitic political adventurer of the name of Wit, also called "von Döring," a title of nobility he had conferred on himself. This individual was in the pay of the equally notorious Duke Karl of Brunswick, one of the most lurid specimens of contemporary despotism, whom a few years later even the good-natured Brunswickers could stand no longer, burning his palace and driving him ignominiously into exile. Heine, whose ambition was to receive a decoration from the Duke, placed the columns of the *Annalen* at Wit's service for the defence of his master.¹

Another of Heine's dreams was an appointment as professor at the University of Munich. Such a post would be in the gift of the King of Bavaria and Heine's prospects seemed at first very bright. King Ludwig I was a decided liberal in politics and therefore on bad terms with the clerical party. He had practically abolished the censorship in his dominions, had been one of the few sovereigns to protest against the reactionary Karlsbad resolutions, and had, in the most ostentatious manner, appointed several professors who had rendered themselves unpleasant to more conservative governments. Besides, he was a generous patron of art and literature and, in fact, dabbled in letters himself in his leisure hours. What made the professorship almost a certainty was that Heine could count on the support of Schenk, the Minister of the Interior, himself a dramatic author whose *Belisar* Heine had extolled although it was even worse than Beer's *Struensee*. Heine might have left things as they were, but wishing to leave no wire unpulled he sent the King a message through Cotta to the effect "that he was milder, better and much more moderate now, perhaps even quite different from what he used to be, that the King was surely wise enough to judge of the

¹ The whole of this unpleasant story, together with other matter redounding as little to Heine's glory, is related by Elster in *Beiträge zu Heines Biographie* in *Deutsche Rundschau*, June 1894. See also Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, Letter to Wit, January 23, 1828.

blade by the keenness of its edge and not by the good or bad use that may have been made of it." This absolutely uncalled-for recantation remained unrewarded. For some reason or other the appointment, already drawn up, was never signed by the King. Catholic intrigues were no doubt largely responsible for Heine's failure. Börne had already warned his visitor against the Munich clergy, and Karpeles shows clearly that Heine was, at least towards the end of his stay in Munich, the victim of antisemitic attacks engineered by the Catholic theologian Döllinger in the *Eos*, a small sheet edited by a baptized Jew.

Heine seems to have been very unhappy in Munich. His health was as bad as it had ever been and he found the climate abominable. Hardly a letter has come down to us from that time in which he does not complain at least once of both health and climate, assuring his correspondents that the climate is killing him, that he is "todclend" or "todkrank." He had the superadded vexation that some of his friends refused to believe in the reality of his headaches, a common failing of the lucky ones who have never had any. He made few new friends owing possibly to the state of his health and the unpleasant irritability which was the inevitable consequence. His association with Wit "von" Döring also rendered the formation of otherwise very natural friendships between prominent liberals and the author of the *Reisebilder* highly improbable.

It is regrettable that just with regard to this period of his life materials in the way of letters, diaries and reported conversations are scarce. What we have is inadequate to explain the ethical low-water mark he reaches at this time. The sacrifice of his self-respect seems utterly needless. The explanation offered by a recent writer¹ that it was "the poet's hunger for a chance to work in peace" that drove him to conspire with Wit "von" Döring to obtain a decoration is not plausible. He had at the time no financial cares whatever, he was better

¹ Lewis Brown, *That Man Heine*.

situated than he had ever been, the salary paid by Cotta (2000 florins for six months) was a princely one compared with the income of most professors, his editorial appointment a perfect paradise of leisure compared with the arduous fag of a professor in his first years. In any case a decoration conferred by the malodorous Duke of Brunswick of all persons would not add "immensely" to his prestige and help him to get the coveted professorship. One thing is certain: his cavalier treatment of what were supposed to be his political principles proves that he looked upon them as quite unimportant compared with other purely personal considerations. He was lyric in this as in everything else.

In the spring of 1829 the discomforts of the climate of Munich combined with his restlessness decided him to carry out a plan he had been nursing for some time, a journey to Italy. Before his departure he failed to make arrangements for a renewal of his editorship. That he should so recklessly burn his boats by giving up a sure income shows that he must previously have received fairly definite assurances regarding the professorship from his friend Schenk.¹ So sure was he that he even felt justified in spending the reserve fund of 800 talers he had deposited with Varnhagen. He felt that he had good reason to congratulate himself on his foresight, and no doubt his self-esteem was vastly increased when a little later he received the news that his resignation had spelt the cessation of the *Annalen*.

Heine's Italian journey turned out to be a mere pleasure trip. He went through the Tyrol to Verona and visited Milan, Genoa, Lucca and Florence. He admired paintings, sculptures, the music of Rossini and pretty women. Among them "the poor dumb Tedescho," for Heine could not speak Italian, made many conquests, he assures us, but it would be hard to say in what respect the stay in Italy benefited him. One irresistibly thinks of Goethe, who went to Italy to live an entirely new life, who, knowing Italian, "not only sees but hears" Italy,

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, October 1, 1828 (to Tjutschew).

and who returns to Germany an entirely different man. Not so Heine, who is handicapped by many things: his ignorance of Italian, his unsatisfactory health and, during the second half of his trip at all events, the galling worry about his future, for in spite of the pathetic appeals he addressed to Schenk from Florence the news of his appointment to the professorship never came. This failure not only raised unpleasant financial problems but also deeply hurt his vanity. Besides, Heine was incapable of Goethe's all-embracing, loving interest in the things around him. He saw or at all events took notice of very little: the amphitheatre in Verona, in Milan the Duomo and the Brera, which in his account he dismisses in about a dozen lines. While Goethe left his heart in Italy, Heine, in his later years, seems to have forgotten that he was ever there.

In Venice Heine received the news of his father's serious illness, and although he hastened to return to Germany he was overwhelmed by the news of his death before he could reach his father's bedside. Added to the grief caused by this bereavement Heine's plight was as distressing as it had ever been. He was again in Hamburg, a town he cordially detested and on which he had fondly imagined he had turned his back for ever. He had neither post nor income nor prospects of either; from mother and brothers he could expect no financial assistance whatever, for the family was then so poor that even the expenses of the father's funeral had to be borne by the never-failing uncle. His pride revolted against the idea of returning to Munich after the fiasco of his academic ambitions and, most terrible of all, he was painfully conscious of the persistent barrenness of his poetic genius. This he had to confess to editors who solicited poetic contributions.

In January 1829 he went to Berlin, where, though his friends received him with great cordiality, he was nevertheless "unspeakably miserable." Judging by his letters he must have been in a disagreeable and surly mood, and friends like the Varnhagens and the Roberts deserve

infinite credit for their patience and forbearance.¹ Rahel von Varnhagen, writing to her husband, says: "I am surprised to see him so deeply affected by his father's death, this 'splendid father with whom he had been in such perfect agreement and who understood him so thoroughly.' . . . He wanted to speak against Goethe, so I smiled and there was an end to that. He was going to criticize Gans, with no more success. He began to praise Wit-Döring; that led to the discomfiture of both Wit and Heine! He wanted to criticize Lindner's style. I proved to him that he was wrong." His friends must have breathed a sigh of relief when Heine transferred his ill-bred petulance to Potsdam, where he wrote the greater part of his *Reise nach Italien*.

After a short stay in Heligoland he was obliged to return to Hamburg to watch over the printing of his new work. Campe, one of the meanest publishers that ever exasperated the soul of a sensitive poet, literally had to be watched, and was ever ready to play the meanest tricks to save a few groschen. On this occasion only after endless protests on the part of the poet would he consent to furnish an even tolerably decent paper, that is, one a few degrees better than blotting paper, on condition that the author supplied additional copy. The negotiations were rendered all the more irritating by Campe's provoking way of leaving letters unanswered and finally replying through a third party.

After many delays the new volume, the third of the *Reisebilder*, appeared in December 1829.

¹ Cf. Rahel's letter to Varnhagen of March 11 and 13, 1829. Heine to Rahel, April 1, 1829.

XI

ITALIAN TRAVEL PICTURES

AS was his custom Heine had, while at work on the book, indulged in promises of the stupendous things with which he would charge its pages and the monstrous catastrophe that would overwhelm his enemies. It was to prove a universal massacre, a whole battery was to be used against them, in fact, "he had invented a new kind of gunpowder for the purpose." So that no one might be overlooked he had, as he assured Friederike Robert,¹ drawn up a list of the enemies to be attended to. He must have thought better of it or perhaps mislaid his list for so far as any massacre is concerned the first part of his *Italien*, the *Reise von München nach Genua*, is, with the exception of a few pot-shots at Platen and Massmann, a very harmless piece of writing, as innocent of bloodshed as an account of a Sunday-school excursion. Nor is there anything particularly incriminating in the political views he expresses. He has become more critical on the subject of Napoleon, in whom he admires no longer the man of action but the genius. Napoleon has ceased to be one of the saviours of mankind, the man of the people *par excellence*. He is as unfortunate and disconcerting as ever in his selection of the liberal gods to be worshipped. "Since the death of Canning," he says, "the standard of liberty has been removed from Downing Street to St Petersburg, where liberty has not arisen out of historical events as in England but is based on principles; where the government is permeated with the liberal ideas of modern times and the state is democratic."

The beginning of the *Reise* is delightfully reminiscent

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, May 30, 1829.

of the *Harzreise*, as indeed are individual passages here and there, but they are few in number and there is no fulfilment of his promise to Moser that the book would be written in a "new and free manner." The extraordinary skill he had shown in the *Harzreise* in welding together incongruous elements is gone. What had before been an artistic contrast is now felt as an antagonism between objective treatment and subjective, between romanticism and a realism often bordering on the crudest naturalism. In conjuring up a mood by the simplest means he is still the same consummate artist. With a sigh, a nightingale, a ruin by moonlight, he can create an atmosphere of romanticism. On the other hand, his romantic eye, which so often delights in the esoteric charms of misty vagueness, of dreams and the sickly pallor of moribund faces, is as capable of seeing the concrete world with the clearness of vision of a Goethe. Sometimes he presumes rather much on the reader's responsiveness to the romantic stimulus as when he drags in by the hair of the head, "die tote Maria," but so far from having our hearts rent, which is the intention, we hope it is her very last appearance and we bow our heads more in joy than in sorrow. It must be confessed that his romantic technique now often fails to carry conviction and produces the impression of something prepared according to a recipe.

Heine's ignorance of Italian led him to see the inhabitants not as they were but through the eyes of the romantic tourist who visits the country seeing only what he expects to see, the land of romance and of dreams, the land whose history lies entirely and irremediably in the past. Of a country honeycombed with secret societies, feverishly agitating for a united Italy and free institutions, of a country boiling with a fierce hatred of the foreigner who ruled it with the blindest and most senseless form of despotism, of a vigorous national spirit which had already given an earnest of its vitality by risings in Naples and Sardinia, Heine had not the faintest inkling. Or was he simply not interested?



HEINRICH HEINE, 1827

Drawing by Ludwig Grimm

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE LIBRARY

To compare Heine's work with that of other writers of travel description is of course futile, it is *sui generis*, like everything he writes. The subject of his *Reise nach Italien* is not so much Italy as Heine in Italy; that of Goethe's *Italienische Reise* is obviously the country itself. Except with regard to mere details all points of comparison are wanting, and the result of Bölsche's attempt to compare the two is for this reason unconvincing.

Die Bäder von Lucca, the second part of the *Italien*, has been very aptly called "a novelistic fragment with a few drops of poison for Platen." Heine's pre-eminently lyric talent has rarely attempted to set characters before his readers, but here, although he has merely sketched the beginning of what story there was to be, there is no doubt about the lifelike completeness and the convincing plasticity of two of the figures: the banker Gumpel hailing from Hamburg, a rich Jewish convert to Catholicism, who has assumed the title of *Marchese Gumpelino*, and Hyacinth, his man-servant, formerly a seller of lottery tickets, a man as borné and naïve as he is pathetically honest and, throughout, unconsciously humorous. The rest of the characters are without interest: two Italian women of easy virtue and two English women no less obliging, the poet himself standing between them as the only connecting link. The novel occupies about one half of the second part and culminates in the Rabelaisian recital of the intestinal catastrophe which renders the nocturnal rendezvous between Gumpelino and Julia a physical impossibility. The last scenes of the story supply the transition to the second half which, leaving the characters of the first to their fate, proceeds to the notorious attack on the poet Platen.

Heine had in his *Nordseebilder* published a few distichs of a satirical character from the pen of his friend Immermann, containing perfectly legitimate and sensible criticism of the contemporary exotic craze in poetry. No name was given, and either Platen or Rückert, not to mention others, might be referred to. Rückert took

no notice, but the vain and hypersensitive Platen seemed to think that the cap fitted him particularly well, and he was furious. His rejoinder was a satirical drama, *Der romantische Œdipus*, in which he set himself the task of annihilating Immermann and incidentally Heine. Having admittedly read very little of the former and next to nothing, perhaps nothing at all, of the latter, and not even knowing anything of their personality, he attacked them from what he believed to be a severely classical standpoint as thorough-paced romanticists which, of course, they were not. Of Heine, who was surely sufficiently vulnerable to anyone knowing him even slightly, he only knew that he was of Jewish descent. All his incredibly vulgar jeers, therefore, gyrate around the very one of Heine's transgressions with regard to which we may surely absolve him from all personal responsibility, his birth. Nowadays a writer of Heine's standing who could be accused of no worse a crime than being a Jew could afford to sit back and smile. Not so in the 'twenties of last century, when by the fact of their exclusion from office and from academic appointments Jews were officially stamped as such an irremediably inferior race that not even the miraculous baptismal water was able to wash off the stain of their birth. As the law often left them no alternative but submission to the humiliating ordeal and then treated them as if they had never undergone it, they were like the heretics whom the Holy Inquisition made first recant and then burnt all the same, thus adding injury to insult.

Surely the man who was rash enough to taunt Heine with being a Jew in spite of the fact that he had several years before gulped down his pride and submitted to a ceremony as hateful as it was meaningless in his case, the man who by such gibes cruelly reminded him of the highly probable reason why a writer of his eminence had knocked in vain at the doors of the Universities of Berlin and Munich, was not merely asking but clamouring for the lash. He was not disappointed. Though there is no proof for Heine's assertion that Platen was actually

a moving spirit in engineering the anti-Heine agitation of the *Eos*, the fact that Platen was known to be an intimate friend of Döllinger, the author of the articles, that the *Eos* gave along with the attack on Heine a panegyric of Platen, and that about that time Platen was appointed a member of the Königlich Bayrische Akademie der Wissenschaften, lent some air of probability to the statement.

Even some time before Heine took Platen in hand, critics had been scandalized by some of Platen's poems and by their undoubted homo-sexual trend, and Heine too had, even before his journey to Italy, confessed to the feeling of profound repugnance he experienced on reading some of the incriminated sonnets, a very intelligible feeling in the strongly hetero-sexual Heine. In the *Bäder von Lucca* he was not content to draw attention to the abnormality of the atmosphere of these poems; throughout the book he suggests a substratum of actual experience in Platen's life. If in one place he conjectures that his victim was only playing with such ideas and that his conduct was really blameless, there are at least a score of passages in which the very opposite is affirmed as if admitting of little doubt. So much for Platen, the man.

Heine's vindictiveness had still to vent itself on Platen, the poet. Avoiding Platen's error, who had rushed into the lists against an adversary of whom he had read nothing,¹ Heine shows in every line an intimate and minute knowledge of Platen's writings and a profound acquaintance with the principles and meaning of poetry. He showed Platen to be not a poet, let alone a great poet, but a mere skilful manipulator of words and metres. Such an extreme view may no longer be generally held nowadays, but there can be no doubt about the conviction it carried at the time, and Varnhagen might well write in his review of the book: "The execution is carried out. The executioner has done his work in a masterly manner. The head has fallen."

¹ R. Schlösser, *August Graf von Platen*, Munich, 1913, vol. ii. p. 136.

The storm which burst over Heine's head when the account of this "execution" was published broke all records. It was not so much that sympathy was expressed for the victim—there was little enough of that—as that angry remonstrances were hurled at the executioner. Even friends who owed him some measure of gratitude, such as Michael Beer, turned their backs on him. Beer, who had to be requested by Immermann to write and speak in defence of the author of *Die Bäder von Lucca*, held out little hope. "Tell Heine," he replied, "that to read his book I put on kid gloves, that I am as squeamish as ever and that food as coarse as his satire gives me indigestion."¹ How seriously he had compromised himself Heine realized when his most intimate friend, Moser, frankly protested against his "ignoble revenge." All his friends, whether they said so openly or not, were convinced that he had committed an unpardonable mistake when, instead of confining himself to Platen's works, he had attacked him on the score of his sexual sensations, which, after all, were the result of his physical organization, his natural disposition.

Varnhagen was about the only one to write a really favourable review of the book. He declined, however, to pronounce himself on the right and wrong of the case, contenting himself with praising the genius of the author and the exemplary skill and thoroughness with which he had performed his unsavoury task, all of which is undeniable. Heine, at first triumphant, soon realized that he had done himself an enormous amount of irreparable harm, and he determined to omit the Platen controversy from future editions of the *Reisebilder*. This laudable resolution, however, which gives us the measure of his repentance, was never carried out. An action for slander which Platen threatened to take, the issue of which was in any case doubtful, was dropped. One of the unfortunate results of the scandal was that the attention of critics and public was riveted to the

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, Beer to Immermann, April 11, 1830.

unsavoury part of the book and that the many excellent portions not connected with the controversy received little notice.

The gravamen of the charge against Heine lay, of course, apart from the nauseous character of his subject, in the apparent rashness with which from the poems he drew conclusions regarding Platen's life, a critical method he had himself vigorously condemned when applied to his own poem.¹ That Heine, as he assured his friends, knew more about Platen than appeared in *Die Bäder von Lucca*, "horrors which he did not care to set down on paper," is probably true, if by "knowing" is merely meant "having heard." After the publication of the book the air was no doubt thicker than ever with the wildest rumours. We may, however, conclude from certain portions of Platen's Diary,² that Heine's guesses were not so very wide of the mark after all. Platen had undoubtedly written even more amazingly frank poems than those which reached the public, so unreserved in their suggestiveness and so personal in their appeal that one of the recipients, Schmidlein, one of his closest friends, replied to the poet indignantly repudiating the suggestion. It would also appear from numerous other portions of the Diary that these abnormal feelings were not confined to his verse or were a mere echo of ancient modes of thought and feeling, but really constituted an obsession of his everyday life. The unfortunate poet himself deplored what Schlösser³ calls "his fatal dowry on earth, his inclination towards his own sex." "If nature forbids this love," Platen exclaims, "why did she fashion me like that?" These facts must be mentioned, as they show the rumours about Platen to have had some foundation in fact, and

¹ "Nothing hurts me more deeply than the attempt to explain the trend of my poems by a reference to the author's life." "How rarely does the external structure of our lives correspond to the real inner history." Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, Letter to Immermann, June 10, 1823.

² *Platens Tagebücher*, edited by Laubmann and Scheffer. See particularly Schmidlein's letter of October 1819 in vol. ii.

³ R. Schlösser, *August Graf von Platen*, Munich, 1913.

this naturally lessens to some extent the impression of rashness produced by Heine's inferences.

That the attack was made in the public interest, as Heine very naturally wishes us to believe *post factum*, is nevertheless untrue. It was an act of private revenge and nothing more, but it was performed in reply to an attack equally devoid of consideration for the public good. If the public reproaches levelled at Heine were fiercer than those which fell to the share of Platen, this was due not only to racial prejudice but also, and perhaps mainly, to the infinitely more effective and therefore apparently more merciless character of Heine's mode of warfare. Heine's claws were longer and sharper than Platen's and he naturally used them without first trimming them to the size of his opponent's. Besides, it should not be forgotten that Platen was not only the challenger but had himself chosen to wage the combat in the arena of personal disparagement. It was his misfortune not to know until it was too late that he was slinging mud at a past master of the art.

XII

LAST YEARS IN GERMANY

LITTLE is known of the period of about eighteen months that follows the publication of *Italien*. His letters of this time, as indeed of any time, deal mainly with business matters, petty money cares, complaints about his health and his friends, but rarely give us an insight into his plans or into the inner working of his mind except by inference. The author of *Die Bäder von Lucca*, socially never a popular favourite, had few friends. At this time of boycott so few cared to know much about him, or even let it be known they were on friendly terms with him, that our data from all sources are lamentably meagre. August Lewald tells us that Heine enjoyed no public recognition in Hamburg; the people devoured his works but were not interested in him personally.¹

With the exception of a few months in Wandsbeck and on Heligoland he spent most of his time in Hamburg, dependent to some extent on his uncle's charity and asphyxiated by that sickening mercantile atmosphere. The mood is expressed by the poem, *Anno 1829* :

Dass ich bequem verbluten kann,
Gebt mir ein edles, weites Feld !
O, lasst mich nicht ersticken hier
In dieser engen Krämerwelt.

Sie handeln mit den Spezerei'n
Der ganzen Welt, doch in der Luft,
Trotz allen Würzen, riecht man stets
Den faulen Schellfischseelenduft.

O, dass ich grosse Laster säh',
Verbrechen, blutig, kolossal,—

¹ Houben, *Gespräche*, p. 153.

Nur diese satte Tugend nicht
Und zahlungsfähige Moral !

Ihr Wolken droben, nehmt mich mit,
Gleichviel nach welchem fernen Ort !
Nach Lappland oder Afrika,
Und sei's nach Pommern—fort ! nur fort !

O, nehmt mich mit—Sie hören nicht—
Die Wolken droben sind so klug !
Vorüberreisend dieser Stadt
Aengstlich beschleun'gen sie den Flug.

His literary inspiration and even his desire to work were correspondingly low. Both the poet and the political writer were paralysed ; the former seemed to have made his farewell bow in 1827 with the publication of the *Buch der Lieder*, and the latter had as the outcome of the Platen scandal acquired so deplorable a reputation that all idea of political leadership, indeed of political influence of any kind, had to be abandoned. There have been minds so self-sufficient, so inexhaustibly resourceful within themselves as to be apparently independent of the nature of their surroundings. Goethe and Schiller did their best work in the diminutive and incredibly uninspiring Weimar, which in Goethe's time numbered no more than 6600 inhabitants. Heine in such environment is unthinkable. His productivity was entirely dependent upon an infinite variety of moods evoked by an equally varied succession of external stimuli. A monotonous life spelt barrenness to his genius, and had Heine been obliged to spend his life in some small provincial town little would have been heard of his literary activity. Hamburg, though a town of considerable size, was yet socially uninspiring and spiritually dead, and to Heine no more stimulating than any heap of bricks and mortar would have been.

The work on the third instalment of *Italien* was proceeding with tedious slowness, when an event awoke the author from his lethargy, the July Revolution in France, one of the most picturesque and romantic of political

upheavals in the world's history. That right in the densest and most desperate atmosphere of reaction, when in practically every European country all liberal manifestations seemed to be strangled, a mere handful of students and working men should be able to turn the tables on the powers of reaction within less than a week and force Charles X to abdicate, bordered on the miraculous, and held out glorious possibilities for the rest of Europe.

"Gone is my yearning for rest," Heine wrote when he received the news in Heligoland. "Once more I know what I want, what I ought to do, what I must do. I am the son of the Revolution and I seize again the enchanted weapons over which my mother pronounced her magic spell. Flowers! Flowers! I will wreath my head for the mortal combat. And the lyre, too, hand me the lyre that I may sing a battle song. Words like flaming stars which flash down from the height and burn the palaces and illumine the huts. Words like polished lances which wing their way into the seventh heaven and strike at the pious hypocrites who have sneaked into the holy of holies. I am all joy and song, all sword and flame."¹

The immediate effect on the political situation in Germany was merely a *succès d'estime*, and bore little fruit: a characteristically German result. The great French Revolution, too, had received the joyous acclamations of the leaders of German thought, of Kant and Schiller, of Wieland and Herder, who all, however, shrank terror-struck from the very idea of seeing a similar upheaval in their own country. All that Germany saw in 1830 was a few insignificant local risings, the most important being that which drove the Duke of Brunswick into exile, while the liberal ardour and the intelligence of the Hamburgers manifested itself in a particularly inane way by an attack on the local Jews, which resulted in a great deal of wanton destruction of property. Even this picturesque revival of the Middle Ages through which Heine passed unharmed and with surprising equanimity, if we are to judge by his letters, did not damp his faith

¹ August 10, 1830, Heligoland. From Heine's *Ludwig Börne*.

in the sagacity of the masses and the efficacy of popular movements. The feeble German response to the French clarion call made little difference, as Heine had always considered the political conditions of his fatherland as particularly desperate. The main thing was that France, which had once before set the example, had again broken her fetters and achieved freedom. To Heine this was sufficient as a political *Erlebnis*, no matter whether Germany followed the example or not. A genuine political writer of the type of Börne showed his bitter disappointment when Germany again declined to stir, and the few local disturbances he scornfully dismissed as merely showing that the patient German sheep had had a fit of the staggers.

Under the exhilarating influence of this event Heine felt his strength and courage returning. Within a few months the last volume of his *Italien* was ready for publication, and it appeared in November of the same year.

Die Stadt Lucca is composed of parts written at different times which the genius of the writer has succeeded in welding together. About one half is as genuine a *Reisebild* as Heine can write, a fascinating poetic description of places interwoven with reflections quaintly humorous and often profound. In the *Harzreise* the poet's thoughts seem to skim along the surface and are, on the whole, those of a clever, impertinent university student. In *Die Stadt Lucca* they have gained a wonderful fulness and maturity, and the author is not afraid to devote several pages to fathoming a problem. There is a charming lightness about Heine's profundity which may well be mistaken for shallowness by persons who look upon profundity as inseparable from tediousness, but his lightness of touch is in reality another proof of Heine's genius and constitutes one of the inimitable characteristics of his style. There is remarkably little triviality or levity in this work, even the Franziska of the *Bäder von Lucca*, who pays the poet a flying visit, rises to a higher level and is ready to discuss religious and political

questions with the author : the relations of Church and State, paganism and Christianity, the part played by the Jews in the evolution of religious ideas, and indifference in matters of religion as the only remedy for religious strife and intolerance.

His readers may well be taken aback to find the daring iconoclast showing unwonted moderation in dealing with his pet aversions, the throne and the altar. They cannot avoid an uneasy suspicion that the "sword and flame" of revolutionary liberalism is on this occasion fighting a rearguard action. He seems for the moment to have become a fervent champion of religion and the monarchical principle, and the reader's suspicions, so far from being allayed, are rather strengthened by the contrast between the revolutionary pæan of the Postscript, written after the July Revolution, and the greater part of the work itself, which had been written before. He assures us, in Chapter XIV of *Die Stadt Lucca*, that he is not an enemy of the throne and the altar. "I revere the inner holiness of every religion, and I submit to the interests of the State. Though I have no particular use for anthropomorphism, I believe in the glory of God, and though kings may be so foolish as to resist the spirit of the people, I yet remain in my deepest convictions an adherent of the royal power, of the monarchical principle. I do not hate the throne, I only hate the pretentious noble vermin which infest the crevices of the ancient thrones. I do not hate the altar, but I hate the serpents which lie in ambush among the rubble around the old altars." All this seems forgotten when he hears the "Marseillaise" under his window, "the triumphant chant of death of the Gironde," the old, sweet cradle-song which thrills him with ardour and joy and kindles in him flaming stars of enthusiasm and the rockets of his scorn. "Ringing torrents of flaming song shall pour down from the heights of exultant liberty in the boldest cascades as the Ganges rushes down from the Himalayan Mountains. And thou, fair Satyra, daughter of the justice-loving Themis and the goat-footed Pan, lend me

thine aid. Thou too hast sprung from the race of the Titans and hatest like me the enemies of the kinsfolk, the weakling usurpers of Olympus. Lend me the sword of thy mother that I may judge the hated brood, and give me the pipes of thy father that I may kill them with my piping."

It would be a serious error to attribute such a *volte-face* to mere want of character, always the easiest and readiest of explanations when dealing with Heine, and to blame him accordingly. We may assume he was sufficiently intelligent to see what a shock such rapid transitions would be to the reader, and the very fact that he makes no attempt to gloss them over, when he was quite clever enough to do so, demonstrates not only his frankness and his honesty, but is another proof of the insignificant part political opinions as such, their rightness or wrongness or consistency, play in his life at this period. It is very true that in *Die Stadt Lucca* he had for the first time undertaken a rational examination of questions of public interest such as the relations of Church and State, but he was at this period still too lyrical not to be swayed by the first significant experience that came along. He would be the last to be surprised at seeing his most cherished logical conclusions swamped by a mood such as that which gave us the Postscript to *Die Stadt Lucca*. Such a thing is not only natural in a poet like Heine, but is surely "allgemein menschlich" as well.

The *Englische Fragmente*, written in 1828 as the fruit of his visit to England, had already appeared in various journals and were now published along with *Die Stadt Lucca* as the last instalment of the *Reisebilder*. Apart from a few characteristic passages the first half is mere journalism and cannot rank as literature. Considering the short time he had spent in England, the few people he knew that could guide him through the mazes of the unknown, the geographically limited scope of his inquiry—London and Ramsgate!—and the amount of money and time he lavished on the absorbing task of amusing himself, no other result could have been expected. Some

of the chapters like that on the National Debt were obviously the outcome of later study. His attitude towards everything English is mainly based on gross ignorance concerning the people of England. Nor is his mode of presentation particularly interesting. He really does not get into his stride until he reaches the chapter on Scott's *Life of Napoleon* and the one on Wellington, which gave him an opportunity for canonizing the exile of St Helena who had been "murdered by the English but sold by Sir Walter Scott." In the Wellington chapter he bids farewell to the Napoleon of his younger days.

"What vexes me most is the thought that Arthur Wellington will remain just as immortal as Napoleon Buonaparte. In exactly the same way the name of Pontius Pilate remains just as forgotten as the name of Jesus Christ. Wellington and Napoleon! It is a wondrous phenomenon that the human mind should think of both at one and the same time. There is no greater contrast than these two, even in their exterior. Wellington, that silly spectre, with an ashy grey soul in a body stiff as starched linen, a wooden smile on his icy features, and beside him the picture of Napoleon, every inch a god! Never will this image fade from my memory. I still see him sitting proudly on his horse with his eternal eyes in the marble pallor of his imperial face, gazing as impassively as fate down upon the Guards filing past—he was sending them to Russia at the time, and the old Grenadiers looked up at him with such grim devotion, such knowing earnestness, such deadly pride—

Te, Cæsar, morituri salutant!

"Sometimes a secret doubt creeps over me, whether I had really seen him, whether we were really his contemporaries, and then it seems to me as if his image, torn from the narrow frame of the present, were receding prouder and more imperious into the twilight of the past. His very name sounds like the lore of olden times, and just as ancient and heroic as the names of Alexander and Cæsar."

It is the last time Heine makes his genuflexions before his idol and offers up incense on his altar. Its relegation to the pantheon of the great dead of the past is definite and irrevocable.

One might imagine Heine would now as speedily as possible carry out the plan he had many a time cherished in his heart, that of a journey to Paris, the new Mecca, with a view to settling there! We find him, however, making another, and a last attempt, to obtain employment in the state service of Prussia and even of Austria. Biographers have been tempted to establish, not without a show of reason, a connection between these efforts and the political moderation of *Die Stadt Lucca*. While this interpretation may be founded on fact, what we are mainly interested in is seeing that he strained every nerve to ward off what might, and in the end did, result in exile. Had Heine been as devoid of love for his country as some would have us believe there would have been nothing to prevent his immediate departure for Paris as early as August 1830. He had the very best reasons for turning his back on Germany. His fatherland offered him no opportunity for making a living: the service of the state and the universities were closed to him, and even the modest post of attorney to the city of Hamburg was beyond his reach. The miserable sums he managed to squeeze out of the stingy Campe were hopelessly inadequate. If he remained he had the choice between the poorhouse and humiliating dependence on his uncle, with whom at this time he was not on very friendly terms.¹

While the reasons for leaving Germany are surely painfully convincing, it is less obvious why he should have fancied that Paris held out brighter opportunities for becoming financially independent. The freedom from censorship alone would no doubt make Paris a paradise in the eyes of an author whose works censors had hitherto mutilated more ruthlessly than those of any other writer. Moreover, Paris was not only the focus of European liberalism but the centre from which radiated the gospel of Saint-Simonism, a doctrine which to the aristocratic Heine furnished the indispensable corrective for the dreaded perils of mob government.

¹ Therese Devrient in Houben, *Gespräche*, p. 169.

It proposed to abolish the old hereditary aristocracy and it preached a new one, the aristocracy of brains and genius, which naturally appealed irresistibly to Heine, as it would inevitably include him. Still, neither political liberalism, nor freedom of the Press, nor Saint-Simonian enthusiasm were in themselves sources of income, and the dream to which he clung for many years of becoming in time as distinguished a French author as he had been a German could not possibly be realized for a considerable time. In these circumstances to represent Heine, the "vaterlandslose Geselle," as lightly skipping off to Paris, attracted by the gaiety of "la ville lumière," is absurd. It was a tremendous resolution to take, and he clearly realized its full import. It meant relying in future on the journalist for income and fame, and leaving the poet behind him in Germany. Storm's line: "Kein Mensch gedeihet ohne Vaterland," is surely particularly true of the poet, who more than any other man draws strength and inspiration from the land of his birth, from its language and its traditions.

The oft-repeated legend that Heine fled to Paris as a political refugee to escape vague and, for that reason, all the more terrible dangers at the hands of German despotism, is untrue, and those who base their faith in this popular tradition on Heine's own facetious remark made years later, that he had to choose between eating oysters in Paris and living on bread and water in the fortress of Spandau, are confusing history and literature. Heine went into voluntary exile. Individual states might have warned him off their territory, as Württemberg had done not long before, but he was free to go anywhere else. That about a decade later he was no longer free to return to Germany, or at least to Prussia, is indeed true, but by that time the situation was entirely different, as we shall see later on.

Heine made up his mind somewhat suddenly and crossed the French frontier on the first of May 1831, arriving in Paris two days later.

XIII

PARIS

“**I** AM drowned in the whirlpool of events, of the torrent of each day, of the roar of the Revolution; moreover, I consist entirely of phosphorus.” This was the effect on Heine of the change from the dull and foggy Hamburg to Paris in spring, when that city looks its loveliest.

At first his most sanguine expectations seemed to have been realized. He found the French to be the most polite, most cultured and most progressive nation under the sun, the women fascinating, the food in the restaurants excellent, and the wines superb. It was a time when even the most uncouth and unkempt German refugee, provided he could boast of anything like an artistic or literary record, was received, if not with open arms, at least with kindness and genuine interest. How much more the well-dressed Heine with his refined and ingratiating manners, admirable, witty causeur that he was, who adapted himself so readily to the congenial French environment that as early as 1833 Sainte-Beuve could say: “He is completely naturalized, he belongs entirely to us,” and that in spite of his “accent germanique très prononcé et fort désagréable.” Not that Heine’s arrival was really heralded by a great literary reputation. He was practically unknown in France before the July Revolution, but he benefited by the charming legend created by Mme de Staël of a naïve, virtuous and romantic, if somewhat unpractical and unprogressive Germany, a harmless country inhabited by a harmless people, by modest, blue-eyed, fair-haired maidens, by poets and philosophers, the latter so profound that Frenchmen were saved the trouble of trying



HEINRICH HEINE

Drawing by an unknown artist (possibly about 1828)

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to understand them by their very profundity which no man could fathom anyhow. That mysterious thing, German philosophy, a recent conquest of French Romanticism, thus became all the more attractive. That the legend survived under the heavy tread of the muddy-booted Prussian Grenadiers in 1815 demonstrates either the vitality of the legend or the unconquerable optimism of the French.

German writers were at the time in France what Klopstock, according to Lessing, had been in his time in Germany, "more admired than read." When Heine quickly made his way into the literary salons and coteries of Paris, he did so not as the poet but as the causeur and the journalist. Very few Frenchmen knew German, and there were few translators of the competence of Lœve-Veimars. Even among translators the ignorance of German and the want of literary discernment were often appalling.¹ Howlers like the well-known

"si tu aperçois une rose dis-lui que je lui envoie mes plus empressés compliments,"

as a translation of

Wenn du eine Rose siehst,
Sag, ich lass' sie grüssen,

were by no means rare. Only with a very few of the leading authors could Heine be said to be on intimate terms. On some of the very greatest, on Victor Hugo, Musset, Lamartine, and de Vigny, he seems to have failed to make an impression if the absence of his name from any of the writings of these authors can be accepted as a proof.² His Jewish origin, of course, never stood in his way, as the French were utterly indifferent to the question of race and most of them to that of religion as well. In Germany neither Jew nor Gentile would let him forget that he was a German Jew; in France, curi-

¹ See F. L. Reymand, *L'influence allemande en France au XVIII^e et au XIX^e siècle*, Paris 1922, and Th. Süpple, *Geschichte des deutschen Kultureinflusses auf Frankreich*.

² L. Betz, *Heine in Frankreich*, p. 32.

ously enough, he was for the first time allowed to be just a German.

Political and racial persecution, whether real or imaginary, having for the moment passed out of his life, he might perhaps, if he had only been left alone, have been content to look upon politics from a different angle. His interest in these matters became academic, almost impersonal, and while he was by no means averse to retaining the title of tribune of the people, which tickled his vanity, he was less than ever inclined to surrender the smallest particle of the comforts and delights of his Parisian life in the service of the liberal cause. His political wrath had in the past been aroused not so much by the state of servitude of his fatherland or the enslaved condition of the human race at large as by the innumerable shackles which prevented him personally from living in the fullest meaning of the term. When once his own freedom was achieved he was ready to declare that "he was now at peace with all that existed," and if he threw himself whole-heartedly into the Saint-Simonian movement with its revolutionary programme for the reform of that very state of things with which he had already declared himself perfectly satisfied, there was a special reason for it.

Saint-Simonism, one of the forerunners of the socialistic systems of our own time, was essentially an economic doctrine. Incidentally it abolished the older moralists' hierarchy of pleasures, the distinction between higher and lower, spiritual and material. This was called the rehabilitation of matter or, more crudely, the rehabilitation of the flesh. Needless to say, the latter appellation damned the whole system in the eyes of all people whose minds could only run smoothly in traditional grooves. There was indeed a coarse sound about the word flesh due mainly to the evil reputation which that dour, ascetic bachelor, St Paul, had given it, and its subsequent close companionship with the world and the devil. Originally the ethical portion of the system was nothing more than one of the innumerable protests of normal

humanity against Christianity's overstressing of the spiritual at the expense of the physical. To the Christian "Dieu esprit" Saint-Simon opposed a "Dieu esprit et matière," thus restoring the balance of nature that had been upset by Christianity.

If Heine mistook the incidental for the essential in Saint-Simonism and laid undue stress on the purely moral portion of the system, he was for all that not entirely blind to some of its other principles: faith in the excellence of this world, the ever-continuing and ascending progress of mankind and the right of all men to the pleasures of this life, the demand that the disinherited of all kinds, economic as well as racial, should be raised from their state of inferiority and servitude, and that the nations should work together in harmony each according to its own genius: France to lead in religion, Germany in science, England in industry, and so on. The fundamental question raised by Saint-Simonism of the relations between capital and labour did not interest Heine as it did not touch him personally. He was satisfied with the discovery that Saint-Simonism set the seal of philosophical even of religious sanction on some of his most characteristic thoughts and feelings. He was flattered to find that he had thus acted as a herald and prophet of Saint-Simonism before he had ever heard of Saint-Simon. Had he not, to the disgust and indignation of some of his readers, boldly celebrated sensual love in his earliest poems? Had he not divided mankind into Nazarenes and Hellenes, spiritualists and sensualists, at the same time proclaiming himself a Hellene? Had he not espoused the cause of the disinherited and proclaimed the brotherhood of nations?

During no other period had Heine been more eager to enjoy the fulness of life as a Hellene. He had left behind him the depressing dulness of Hamburg, he had escaped from what he imagined to be the snares and machinations of clergy and nobility and outwitted the spies of the Prussian police. He had been allowed to

strip off the irksome, galling Jew, and could at last breathe freely. His physical condition was excellent. Théophile Gautier describes him at this time as handsome, with every appearance of robust health, a German Apollo, with a high forehead as pure as marble, fair-haired and blue-eyed, with round, full and rosy cheeks. Nor must we forget that this community of ethical interests with his brethren of the Saint-Simonian faith brought home to the egotist the conviction of a common humanity, and made him feel that solid ground under his feet, which his own wavering character could never give him, a feeling he had only experienced once before when in Berlin he had identified himself with the modern cultural movement in Judaism. Heine was deeply influenced by Saint-Simonism and as a result we have for a time at least a strangely spiritual Heine we have not known before. The religious indifference he had hitherto advocated gave way to a yearning to be a priest of the new religion, the spread of which now appeared to him infinitely more important than the best forms and systems of state government. "Political forms," he says, "are of secondary importance as long as the very idea of life remains undetermined." So great was the fervour he showed for the cause that *Enfantin*, the successor of Saint-Simon, called him "der erste Kirchenvater der Deutschen."

We have characteristic reminiscences of the Saint-Simonian mood and convictions in prose and verse ever after, and the following to be found in the first chapter of *Deutschland* is a particularly striking example of Heine's delightfully frivolous interpretation of Saint-Simonism :

Ein neues Lied, ein besseres Lied,
O Freunde, will ich euch dichten !
Wir wollen hier auf Erden schon
Das Himmelreich errichten.

Wir wollen auf Erden glücklich sein
Und wollen nicht mehr darben.
Verschlemmen soll nicht der faule Bauch,
Was fleissige Hände erwarben,

Es wächst hienieden Brot genug
Für alle Menschenkinder,
Auch Rosen und Myrten, Schönheit und Lust,
Und Zuckererbsen nicht minder.

Ja, Zuckererbsen für Jedermann,
Sobald die Schoten platzen !
Den Himmel überlassen wir
Den Engeln und den Spatzen.

It was not long before Heine's vision with regard to France became clearer, and he saw imperfections and drawbacks in much that had hitherto appeared flawless. He discovered that the French besides being polite and cultured could also be vain and unreliable, and could display an objectionable habit of bragging of the liberty they had won. He found that the net results of the vaunted July Revolution were really insignificant, and that the régime of the bankers was not much better than that of their predecessors, the aristocracy and the clergy ; that their citizen king, Louis Philippe, besides cutting rather a ridiculous figure generally, could be as brutal in repressing political discontent as Charles X had been ; that Poles and Italians, in their struggle for freedom, looked in vain for the support of a king who, though set on his throne by the forces of liberalism, knew no higher duty than to curry favour with the reactionary princes of Europe.

To this painful disillusionment was added the growing unpleasantness of his relations with his German compatriots in Paris. The 80,000 Germans residing in the city were mainly clerks and small tradesmen with a sprinkling of journalists. There were quite a number of adventurers among them and not a few downright loafers who made a living by sponging on their good-natured compatriots. Their liberalism was naturally of a very advanced type, due in this case to the fact that their residence abroad exempted them from all dread of reprisals from the German Governments. Among those who had fled from despotic Germany were no doubt some of

whom Nietzsche would have said that they had thrown away the last thing of value when they threw away their servitude. These Germans talked wildly of the coming German revolution and, in the meantime, exercised their fierceness on those of more moderate views. The arrival of Heine, the tribune of the people, who by the way had done next to nothing to deserve the title, aroused great expectations which were almost immediately disappointed. Even before he came to Paris he realized that he had little enough in common with the German extremists. He was almost afraid of them and had expressed the fear to Varnhagen, that if a revolution broke out in Germany his own head would not be the last to fall. In Paris he at once recognized the awkwardness of the situation, and he wrote to Varnhagen a few weeks after his arrival: "These demagogues are the enemies of all moderation, and because I refuse to participate in their madness they insist on compelling me to abdicate as tribune. This I declined to do. Thank Heaven! the cholera, or rather the dread of it, has rid me of a number of these bores."

Heine was too clear-headed not to see in the extremists' demand for a republic anything more than a chimera. He knew how immature the Germans were politically and how incapable of seeing a vast undertaking like a revolution through to the bitter end. His contemptuous estimate of his compatriots was to be justified a year later when at the famous Hambacher Fest, at which the most vehement republican speeches met with the enthusiastic approval of a crowd of 30,000 radicals, a motion to organize a revolutionary agitation in Germany came to nothing because those present declared themselves incompetent to pass it as their constituents had not specifically authorized them to do so.

A campaign of slander was the reward of Heine's moderation. The "tribune of the people" now became the "paid agent of Austria." Börne's presence in Paris made matters a great deal worse, for his unbending character, his incorruptible honesty, his unwavering

fidelity to his principles and his fearlessness cast, by the contrast, an unpleasant light on the apparently timid and vacillating Heine, who seemed anxious only to run with the hares and hunt with the hounds. The charge was by no means without foundation. Often, when to avoid a breach with his radical friends he had spoken with greater frankness of the sins of reactionary governments, he tried hard to neutralize the effect on the authorities by conciliatory statements in the opposite direction. On one occasion he even went to the length of calling on the Prussian ambassador to assure him of his utter harmlessness. There is no doubt that quite apart from any question of fear of reprisals from the German Governments, Heine was at this period strongly disposed to take up a conciliatory and almost bourgeois attitude towards governments in general, and this not only because of his innate propensity to aristocratic aloofness, the terror with which ignorant and unwashed crowds filled him, but also owing to the fact that for the moment he was suffering no personal inconvenience at the hands of the authorities, and that he could see no reason why, if the vindictive radicals would only tone down their extravagant expectations with regard to him, this pleasant calm should not prevail for ever.

To attribute Heine's political tergiversations invariably to want of backbone is not quite fair. He was willing to live at peace with the whole world, but the obtuse and fear-ridden governments and the short-sighted fanaticism of the German radicals would not let him. No matter how benevolent Heine's general attitude might be toward the German Government, there were occasions when it was difficult for a man of self-respect to hold his tongue, especially if the urge to speak out was rendered irresistible by the possession of the remarkable powers of expression of a Heine.¹ The radicals would immediately magnify the importance of his utterance, claim the author as one

¹ The patriotic Treitschke's *Geschichte Deutschlands im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert* gives innumerable instances of the incredibly idiotic tyranny of the period of reaction.

of their own, indeed as their leader, and Heine would be compelled to disclaim such interpretation and in his anxiety to show the fundamental differences which separated him from these republican propagandists would sometimes go further than he would have gone without such provocation. Few people feel within themselves the call to martyrdom and fewer still enjoy suffering for a cause which is not their own.

Heine found his financial resources hopelessly inadequate to defray the expenses of the life his heart was set on. The 4000 francs his uncle continued to pay him, supplemented by Campe's fees and a few thousand francs earned by journalistic work, might have enabled him to live simply and frugally—the last thing Heine would or could be expected to do—but his budget broke down under the strain of his expensive taste in food, wine and women. Speculation on the Stock Exchange which his friendly relations with the bankers, Rothschild and Fould, encouraged him to indulge in only resulted in further embarrassments. Heine had no choice, he had to revert to his old expedient in financial distress, raising loans. So he borrowed right and left, even from people like Moser, whose friendship he had formally and solemnly renounced when Moser had protested against Heine's attack on Platen. From now on this burden of debt goes on increasing, adding to his other worries, seriously affecting his health, and impeding his liberty of action in his dealings with the unspeakable Campe.

XIV

THE INTERPRETER OF FRANCE TO GERMANY

THE first time Heine functioned as a priest of Saint-Simonism was towards the end of 1831, when he began the series of writings, the underlying idea of which was to bring about a mutual understanding between France and Germany by making these countries better known to each other. His first contribution towards that object is to be found in a number of articles he wrote for Cotta's *Morgenblatt*. These dealt with the annual exhibition of paintings which is held in Paris in the spring and is called the *Salon*. The title *Salon* was subsequently attached by Heine to four volumes of miscellaneous writings for the whimsical reason that the selection of the writings contained in any volume was as haphazard as that of the pictures covering the walls of a picture-gallery.

Heine was fairly well qualified for the task. He had had some art training in Düsseldorf, had had much intercourse with artists in Munich, had been an assiduous visitor to picture-galleries in Germany and Italy, and he had an eye for form and colour. The subject was not entirely new to him. He could therefore attempt something more ambitious than mere "juggling with red and green words" which was all that Börne's art criticism amounted to, according to Börne's own confession.

His canons of criticism are such as we might expect of the lyric poet, indeed of any artist: they very obviously reflect the method he would like to see applied to his own works. The question should not be asked, he says: "What ought the artist to give us?" but "What does he want to give us?" This being settled there

merely remains for the critic to determine whether the artist is equipped with the means to carry out his intentions and whether he has set about his task in the right way. "Rules," he says, "should not be prescribed to the artist for they are no use to him in his work, nor to us in forming our judgment. Each artist should be judged according to his own æsthetic laws." The logical consequence of this proclamation of the sovereignty of the artist is "that there is no longer any art, there are only artists." In accordance with this there is nothing dogmatic about Heine's judgments; they are a personal and, if not very profound, at least a very sane appreciation of what he sees, and they do not differ much from the views expressed by contemporary art lovers not wedded to any particular school or theory. Heine, whose knowledge of the finer points of the technique of painting was naturally the weaker part of his critical outfit, confines his examination more or less to answering the question: "What does the artist want to give us?" and touches very lightly on the other: "How does he do it?" He showed a wise discretion in this. What interests him most is the subject of the painting and particularly the thoughts the contemplation of the picture gives rise to.

There is at first a show of objectivity, and the writer succeeds in keeping his own personality in the background, always a hard thing for Heine, but Scheffer's portrait of Talleyrand is too much for him. The memory of the mischief this perfidious statesman has done makes his wrath boil over and he curses the slippery, faithless diplomat in effigy. He sees "the fourteen broken oaths of allegiance fittingly portrayed in his features with Scheffer's vague, deceitful, deadly faded hues, his green and ashy grey. The painter of whom his enemies said that he painted exclusively with snuff and green soap was the one artist to paint this man whom you could kick from behind without making the stereotyped smile disappear from his lips." A painting by Delacroix representing a group of revolutionaries in 1830; a female figure led by the Goddess of Liberty held

out an even more irresistible temptation. So he extols the glory of the three holy days of July, the greatness of the people of Paris, and he tells us of the gods in heaven who gazed down on the great battle, shouted for joy, and would gladly have left their golden chairs and come down to earth to become citizens of Paris. He gives us a perfectly Saint-Simonian interpretation of Robert's "Reapers" in which he sees the apotheosis of life and the sanctification of matter. In his account of Delaroche's "Cromwell looking at the Body of Charles I," the "thoughts the picture evokes" become an eight-page digression. When in 1833 he published a *Nachtrag* to these letters embodying a report on the *Salon* of that year, the digressions on modern French politics made on the flimsiest pretexts take up half the space. It is as characteristic of Heine as it is disappointing to the reader that this art criticism so well begun should in the end lose itself amidst the sands of political journalism.

The first volume of the *Salon*, published in 1834, contained, besides the *Französische Maler* and a few poems, a fragment which more than any other work, except perhaps the poems *An Verschiedene*, has earned for him the reputation of a lascivious writer, *Aus den Memoiren des Herrn Schnabelewopski*. It is like a great many of his works, one might almost say all of them, autobiographic in character, though its value as a record of actual fact is very slender. It is only the first book of what was to have been a great novel founded on contemporary conditions, a *Zeitroman*, but remained unfinished.

The hero is thinly disguised as a young Pole from Gnesen, but he is quite obviously Heine himself. The parents are in reality Samson Heine and his wife, and the Polish Gnesen is only another name for Düsseldorf. The young man travels, visits Hamburg, interested mainly in eating and the denizens of the red light district. He proceeds to Holland, where he has a love affair with the *Wirthin zur roten Kub*. After a rambling account of

incidents and conversations that lead nowhere in particular we have a heated discussion between the atheist *Dricksen* and the pathetic little *Simson* who, ready to die for the existence of God, fights a duel with Dricksen, is wounded, and dies. An admirable chapter on Jan Stein, the painter, is a welcome digression from the desultory meanderings of the hero, and a few well-drawn characters such as the two gossips, Mme Pieper and Mme Schnieper, are quite entertaining.

Wolff gives convincing reasons for his belief that the work was written in Germany and not in France, as suggested by the date of publication. Not only does the "tote Maria" of the "Italienische Reise" haunt the dreams of the poet under the name *Jadwiga*, but the style is strikingly reminiscent of that of the *Reisebilder*, mainly the *Harzreise* and the *Buch Le Grand*.

Menzel, that implacable enemy of Goethe, who in his *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* had proclaimed that the influence of the much overrated Goethe was a thing of the past, was so delighted to see in *Schnabelewopski* the dawn of a new and, of course, anti-Goethean movement in literature that he swallowed it without turning a hair. Most of his contemporaries, however, were deeply shocked by the "blasphemies and obscenities" it contained. We, who have passed through the fiery furnace of naturalism and the modern sex novel, *nous en avons vu bien d'autres* and are correspondingly less shocked. Some of us can hardly understand what all the excitement was about.

Some think that *Schnabelewopski* is Heine's wittiest work. If by that is meant that it contains more witticisms than any other work they are probably right. Unfortunately the wit is often of poor quality, there are even common puns, a vice Heine does not often indulge in. Among the jokes there are quite a number of very old friends whose acquaintance we already made years ago in the *Harzreise*, *Buch Le Grand*, and *Italienische Reise*, and age had not improved them. Heine's

German, which so often presents itself in negligée attire, is here unspeakably sloppy and slipshod.

It would be ludicrous to imagine that such a work could be part of the author's ambitious altruistic scheme to make Germans and French better acquainted with their respective literary and artistic thought. *Schnabelewopski* is obviously a filler to bring the first volume of the *Salon* up to the twenty *Bogen* in fulfilment of the censorship regulation already referred to.

Heine's own explanation of the "accumulation of obscenities" was that he preferred the reputation of being vulgar to that of being too serious a patriot, and thus running the risk of being mistaken for the Paris variety of German demagogue. This is not only delightfully irrelevant but is also untenable in fact, as the book was written in Germany, *i.e.*, before he was aware of the existence of these unpleasantly austere politicians.

Heine's first attempts at purely political journalism were the articles he contributed to Cotta's *Allgemeine Zeitung* between December of 1831 and the autumn of 1832, and ultimately published under the title "*Französische Zustände*." Many of them make dreary reading nowadays. Heine had no illusion regarding their value, and explained in a letter to Varnhagen that he had engaged in this task partly to assert himself and partly because he needed the money. He was in no way qualified to instruct his German readers in contemporary French politics. He was himself a novice in these matters and was not likely to have acquired greater competence by a residence of a little over six months in a country differing so fundamentally from his own. The cosmopolitan society in which he moved was not likely to give him very reliable information regarding the state of things outside Paris. His own political convictions were far from settled and were rendered all the more vacillating by his anxiety to offend neither the reactionary government of Germany nor the German liberals resident in Paris. While showing unwonted

moderation in criticizing monarchical institutions he is compelled every now and then to throw a sop to the radical Cerberus, for he is haunted by the fear that if the republicans were victorious they would infallibly cut his throat.

His task was rendered almost impossible by the circumstance that he was writing not for a French paper but for a German. In France where the liberty of the press was practically unlimited, he might say what he liked even about the government and the king. In Germany Metternich thought it good policy to assert the solidarity of all monarchical governments, even the most impossible, and gave instructions to the censors accordingly. It is true Louis Philippe, though a Bourbon, had fought on the side of the revolution in 1789, had been raised to the throne by a springtide of revolutionary liberalism in 1830, but he was trying hard to live down his shady reprehensible past, and had succeeded in conciliating his royal cousins by a commendable reactionary attitude with regard to the liberal movements in Poland and Italy. Any criticism, no matter how mild, of this royal sinner who had been received again into the fold was criticism levelled at the sacredness of monarchical institutions in general. Before the ninth article appeared the statesman, Gentz, acting for Metternich, wrote to Cotta protesting against the attacks made on the French Government by that "abominable adventurer," Heine. Situated as he was Cotta had no choice, the series of articles came to a sudden end, and Heine was all the more hurt as he was conscious of having striven honestly to be moderate in his criticism. His indignation knew no bounds. At last the political situation in Germany made a very painful personal appeal to him. All his desire to live at peace with the world vanished, and with it the moderation and restraint of his attitude. Exit Heine, the politician, a very dull and uninteresting person, and in his place we get Heine, the satirist, the poet. His revenge was exemplary and as merciless as it had been

in the case of Platen. He published the articles in book form and wrote a preface.

This preface of twelve pages, of which every paragraph is a dagger thrust of unerring aim, is not only the best thing in the whole book, but is at the same time one of the most brilliant feats of the satirist's pen. It is a work of art from beginning to end, built up with consummate skill, not a mere wrathful protest, as it might well have been, against the violence that had been done to his pen by Germany, but a regular battle waged with a careful marshalling of forces, beginning with a series of effective minor attacks resulting in a contemptuous disposal of the small fry among his adversaries, all leading up to the main attack on the only enemy that mattered, Prussia. It is a tactical triumph of the highest order.

We are not, of course, concerned with the accuracy of all the statements he makes about Prussia and her king. What interests us is the method of treatment and the artistic effect. No two adversaries are treated in the same way. With a contemptuous shrug he settles the Junkers who having learnt nothing but card-sharpping, fraudulent horse-trading, and similar rascally accomplishments, imagine that they can fool a whole race, a race which invented gunpowder and the printing-press and the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Nor does he waste much time on the constitutional princes of Germany who, completely under the thumb of Austria and Prussia, are bent only on filching bits of territory from their neighbours, and are like thieves picking one another's pockets while they are being led to the gallows. To Austria alone he respectfully lowers his sword. Austria has always been true to herself and her reactionary system, never yielding, never compromising. With her you knew you had to be on your guard, and you were on your guard. This courteous treatment of Austria makes the fierce assault on Prussia, which follows, all the more effective.

Far more dangerous is Prussia, he continues, with her big belly, her wide mouth, and her corporal's cane,

which she first dips into holy water before laying on, stiff, hypocritical Prussia, the Tartuffe among the nations. There is an apparent anticlimax when immediately after this he turns away from Prussia to some of the writers whom Prussia, the Jesuit of the north, has demoralized and turned into the tools of her despotism. In reality, however, it is only a case of "*reculer pour mieux sauter*," for he now concentrates his fiercest onslaughts on Frederick William III of Prussia, who in time of defeat solemnly promised his people a constitution and without a blush withdrew his promise when the danger was over. Then he plays with the victim as the cat plays with the mouse. He extols his personal virtues: "He is chaste, frugal, an affectionate father, deeply religious, a staunch Protestant, he believes in the symbols," and then like a bolt from the blue: "Ah, I wish he believed in Jupiter, the father of the gods, the avenger of false oaths, and that he gave us at last the promised constitution." He praises his love of justice because out of his own pocket he restored that monument of Prussian justice, the famous windmill of Sanssouci, to the owner who would otherwise have been obliged to sell it. "This is all very fine," he adds, "but where is the promised constitution, to which by all laws human and divine the Prussian people can lay the strongest possible claim? As long as the King of Prussia does not fulfil this most sacred of obligations, as long as he deprives his people of the well-merited, free constitution, I cannot call him just, and when I see the windmill of Sanssouci it makes me think, not of Prussian love of justice, but of Prussian wind. . . . Was it a mere whim that made him promise it? On the contrary, he had the best reasons for doing so, for never did a prince find himself in a more lamentable situation than that of the King of Prussia after the battle of Jena out of which his people delivered him. Without the consolations of religion he would have been driven to despair by the insolence with which the Emperor Napoleon treated him. But, as I have said, he found comfort in

Christianity, which is indeed the best religion when you have lost a battle. He was strengthened by the example of his Saviour; he, too, could say at the time: 'My kingdom is not of this world,' and he forgave his enemies, who with four hundred thousand men occupied Prussia."

From now on the victim gets no further respite and is overwhelmed by a perfect cataract of scornful obloquy. Towards the end comes the solemn warning that the *Moniteur* of 1793 contains the words of the magic formula that can "exorcise the evil spirits of despotism, words mightier than gold and rifles, words with which to call the dead from their graves and send the living to their death, words which make giants out of dwarfs, words which crush giants and cut off the whole of their power as the guillotine cuts off the neck of a king."

He has no hope for Germany, "the big fool with his motley coat, consisting of thirty-six patches and mighty church-bells weighing tons hanging upon his cap.—When the pain which oppresses his heart becomes unbearable he shakes his head like mad and stuns himself with pious Christian ringing of his bells—This fool will continue to perform his old tricks to amuse his masters, he will balance innumerable loads on the tip of his nose and allow hundreds of thousands of soldiers to march over his belly—He will ever be ready to die in defence of his oppressors."

If Heine, as he told Immermann, wanted to prove by this preface that he was not a "paid scamp," he certainly succeeded in demonstrating beyond all doubt that Prussia would not do the paying on this occasion.

XV

DIE ROMANTISCHE SCHULE

IF the *Französische Zustände* was to acquaint the Germans with political conditions in France, *Die Romantische Schule*, as it is known nowadays, was to render the French a similar service with regard to German literature. The work first appeared in 1833 in *L'Europe littéraire*, under the title, *Etat actuel de la littérature en Allemagne*. Heine's assurance to the contrary notwithstanding, it was first written in German and then only translated into French.

The legend of Heine's competence to write his works as readily in French as in German is very widely spread, but it is based mainly on Heine's own cheerful assurances, on the amen of those of his German friends who did not know any better, and on the good-natured encomiums of a few polite but not very veracious Frenchmen. Those best qualified to judge of Heine's spoken French insist on its exotic character and on "l'accent germanique très prononcé et fort désagréable"; at the same time they are ready to admit that he was an admirable causeur, able to hold his own with the wittiest of his Parisian friends. No doubt his very inaccuracies of speech often emphasized his originality of expression. The French, he wrote, too, was never free from exotic elements. After twenty years spent in France he was still unable to write a letter in French without making mistakes.¹ Saint-René Taillandier's opinion is emphatically expressed as follows: "Henri Heine n'écrivait pas notre langue, il la connaissait parfaitement, il en appréciait les finesses, les délicatesses, mais il était incapable de construire une phrase élégante et qui ne fût pas embarrassée de german-

¹ L. P. Betz, *Heine in Frankreich*, pp. 170 ff.

ismes.”¹ Even in the last months of his life his French was “panaché de barbarismes et de phrases inadmissibles.”² The translations of Heine’s works into French were done by Loève-Veimars, Edouard Grenier, Gérard de Nerval and many others. Whenever Heine tried his hand at translating, his work had to be revised and corrected by others.

Heine was, of course, more competent to give the French information about his own country than he had been to instruct his compatriots in French politics, still it was in a way an equally bold undertaking, for if he was a novice in French politics he was in his account of German Romanticism labouring under the serious disadvantage that as a contemporary of this highly controversial movement, and being part of it, he could not hope to have the aloofness and perspective required for an impartial examination of its origin, significance and results. He would be apt to stress those aspects of the movement which specially attracted or repelled him personally, always to be expected in the case of Heine, and, on the other hand, the critical standard of the “romantique défroqué” might be shifting and unsteady. For similar reasons, the various ramifications of the movement and the very complicated nature of its origin would be almost certain to elude his grasp.

Heine sees in German Romanticism one of the battles of the great world-wide conflict between spiritualism and sensualism. Classical art, he says, represents the finite, and its creations can thus be identical with the ideas of the poet; romanticism, on the other hand, is the spiritualistic art which represents the infinite and nothing but spiritualistic relations, or suggests them by a system of traditional symbols. The introduction and spread of Christianity meant a defeat of sensualism by spiritualism, which made another strong bid for domination through literary romanticism. Occasionally Heine’s interpretation of the term spiritualism, while in the main

¹ Saint-René Taillandier, *Ecrivains et poètes modernes*.

² C. Selden, *Les derniers jours de Henri Heine*.

true, is somewhat free. It is made to include among its manifestations the narrow, Chauvinistic nationalism of Jahn, the reformer of gymnastics, and the combination of forces which led to the defeat of Napoleon. In the end we suspect that spiritualism means any manifestations Heine strongly dislikes.

The fundamental idea of the existence of an everlasting world-wide struggle between spiritualism and sensualism is, of course, true, and in no country has the struggle been more obvious and more acute than in Germany. It may even be said that Germany has never been entirely conquered by the forces of spiritualism as represented by the Christian Church. From the time when the sword of Charlemagne coerced the obstreperous Saxons to submit to the baptismal ceremony and right through the Middle Ages there is an undercurrent of protest against the tyranny of the spiritual. No doubt the wars between the Popes and the German Emperors were mainly political in character, nevertheless, the persistently unruly and disrespectful attitude of Germany towards the Vicegerents of Christ on earth was symptomatic of an unwillingness to grant to what then stood for the spiritual a precedence over the temporal. The Renaissance, which spread to Germany, among other countries, was an open revolt against medieval spiritualism, and worldliness now became the recognized enemy of the other-worldliness of the Church. In Germany it ultimately bore its most brilliant fruit in the classical writers of the eighteenth century. Lessing, Wieland, Schiller and Goethe were what Heine would have termed Hellenes. If we leave out of account the important economic aspects of Saint-Simonism, as Heine persistently does, and use the word in its restricted sense of sensualism, we may say that the German classical writers were Saint-Simoniens. The romanticists themselves, at least the early ones, were by no means so spiritualistic as Heine's insistence on this criterion seems to suggest. As the result of their ethical nihilism, the sensualistic often degenerated into the sensual.

In his attempt to set up the one principle determining literary evolution Heine no doubt represents things as being much simpler than they really were; still he deserves credit for having carried the idea through the whole work with remarkable lucidity and steadfast adherence to the principle he has set up, though his method is far from carrying conviction in all cases. German Romanticism is, of course, a great deal more than a mere resuscitation of the Middle Ages or a revolt of spiritualism against sensualism, of Nazarenism against Hellenism, and it does not necessarily involve a return to the Roman Catholic Church, as Heine would have us believe. That Church is not the sole repository of spiritualism, which is by no means rare in Protestant Churches. Surely Protestant puritanism offered a form of spiritualism even freer from sensualistic elements than Catholicism.

German Romanticism was fundamentally a revolt of the individual against the restraint of law in literature and, incidentally, in ethics, and, as such, was one of the phases of the struggle for the emancipation of the individual of which the French Revolution represents the political aspect. It was strongly revolutionary at the outset, so much so that in its reactionary old age it is difficult to recognize the irrepressible young giant who not so many years before had clamoured for the unrestricted freedom of imagination, of genius and of love, and had waged a merciless war against reason and enthroned in her place everything that is irrational in human nature.

The main pillars of theoretical romanticism were Fichte and Schelling. The former, by teaching that the ego is the creator of the non-ego, laid the philosophical foundation for Schlegel's dictum "that the arbitrary will of the poet cannot be made subject to law," whereas Schelling still further elaborated the philosophical basis of the romantic theory, and in his *Philosophie und Religion* paved the way from romanticism to Catholicism. Once a romanticist had reached Schelling it required a strong character to save him from sliding down Schelling's

well-greased inclined plane and landing in an unwholesome mixture of poetry, mystic philosophy, religious occultism and all the other eccentricities and monstrosities of romanticism. Romantic writers who had run the whole gamut of freedom from intellectual and emotional restraint might also in the end seek a safe anchorage in the Catholic faith with the artistic glamour of which their medieval studies had familiarized them. It was entirely a question of character. Goethe and Schiller, too, like so many others passed through a *Sturm und Drang* phase and even came at times under the sway of romanticism, but their virile personalities never lost the solid ground of reality from under their feet and thus felt no need for any refuge in mysticism.

In his exclusive concentration on the spiritualistic aspect of romanticism, Heine hardly gives the movement sufficient credit for its really great achievements: its vigorous protest against the aridity and insipidity of contemporary rationalism and its work in opening up new sources of inspiration, such as the study of medieval German language, literature and history, the first two quite unknown until the romanticists led the way in unearthing the hidden treasures.

Metternich's veto on his political articles and the obvious impossibility of conciliating a statesman who scented danger in the comparatively harmless contributions to the *Allgemeine Zeitung* demonstrated the uselessness of all attempts at moderation and restraint. As the *Romantische Schule* was in the first place addressed to the French, there was no need for being on his guard in the French edition, but he judged it wise to append a short prayer to the preface of the German edition: "To the compassion of the immortal gods I commend the welfare of my fatherland and the defenceless thoughts of its writers." The hopelessness of the situation does not, however, manifest itself as one might have expected in increased vindictive virulence. There was really no need for that, as he had said all the deadly things he wanted to say for the moment about Prussia in his preface to the

Französische Zustände. The conviction of the futility of conciliatory methods rather lifted a weight off his soul and gave him a feeling of ease and freedom he had rarely enjoyed before. The result was an increased cheerfulness, a more intense *Lebensfreude*, a return to something reminiscent of the jovial Heine of the *Harzreise*. A charming, ingratiating smile hovers on his lips as he instructs the French in the rudiments of German thought and literary movements. There is the old lightness of touch about his way of handling abstruse religious and philosophical questions, and if his poetic imagination occasionally manages to convert a half truth and even a quarter truth into an axiom, there are on the other hand few statements in the whole work that do not contain at least enough truth to stimulate the reader's thought. Even apparently frivolous witticisms have a foundation of truth that makes them all the more galling to the people they horrify, as when he calls the Virgin Mary the beautiful "Dame du Comptoir of the Catholic Church," who with her divine smile attracts and holds fast the customers of that Church, especially the barbarians of the North.

The style is often that of a witty causerie ; it rambles along until the author comes to a part of his subject that really interests him, such as Goethe, Schiller, and Lessing in the first part, and he never hesitates to interrupt his literary exposition by a personal or a political digression. He reverently bows before the greatness of Lessing, he has less to say in praise of Schiller, whose characters, "those altarpieces of virtue and morality," he puts far below Goethe's worldly, sullied sinners. His treatment of Goethe is particularly interesting on account of the instance it affords of the obvious importance of mood in everything Heine writes. The rising and falling moods of the pages¹ he devotes to Goethe are very striking ; they are always extreme, descending to the very depths of vituperation, and then by way of reaction rising to the heights of almost unquestioning worship, only to fall

¹ See particularly Elster, *Heines Werke*, vol. v. pp. 246 ff.

again to the lower plane of petulant criticism and then to rise again. These moods seem mainly due to a natural conflict very common among his contemporaries, a conflict between the appreciation of Goethe the poet, especially the younger Goethe, and the ever-increasing dislike of Goethe the man, whose irritating conservatism and chilly aloofness from the practical interests and the urgent needs of the time provoked the impatience even of politicians of moderate views.

Heine is animated by a sincere desire to give the French an attractive survey of Romantic German literature. If he ever deserved the reproach of being a detractor of Germans and Germany it is not in *Die Romantische Schule*. He treats his pupils with charming condescension and a due appreciation of their limited capacity for fathoming esoteric subjects. When he wants to bring home to them the grandeur of the *Nibelungenlied*, he says :

“A Frenchman can only with difficulty understand that, and as for the language in which it is written he can have no idea of that at all. It is a language of stone, the verses are as it were rhymed blocks of granite. Here and there from the fissures red flowers are springing like drops of blood and long trails of ivy are hanging down like green tears. Of the gigantic passions storming in this poem you dear little people can know still less. Imagine a clear summer night, the stars pale as silver, but as large as suns, stand out on the blue heavens, and all the Gothic minsters of Europe agreed to meet on an enormous plain, and they come calmly striding along, the cathedrals of Strassburg and Cologne, the campanile of Florence, the cathedral of Rouen paying court gracefully to Notre Dame de Paris. It is true their gait is a little clumsy and some of them behave so awkwardly that you might be inclined to laugh at their amorous reeling. But there would be an end to this laughing if you saw how they flew into a rage, slaying one another, and how Notre Dame de Paris in despair raised her stony arms to heaven, suddenly seized a sword, and cut off the head of the biggest of the cathedrals. But I am afraid that even then you can have no idea of the principal characters of the *Nibelungenlied*, no tower is as high, no stone as hard as grim Hagen and Kriemhilde thirsting for revenge.”

The most interesting portions of the book are those in which he introduces individual writers of the Romantic Movement to his French protégés. Most of these have never been portrayed with a keener appreciation of their strong and weak points. He reviews the works of the brothers Schlegel, Tieck, Fouqué, Brentano, Arnim, Uhland, even Laube and Gutzkow, who certainly do not belong to romanticism, and Jean Paul, who is in a class by himself; but Heine found him on his way, he was too big to be passed by, so he had to come along too. To this lucky accident we owe a most sympathetic and picturesque characterization of Jean Paul and of the abstruse confusion of the baroque and often indigestible style of that author.

“Of this style,” he says, “no clear, well-ordered French head can have any conception. The structure of Jean Paul’s periods consists of innumerable little rooms which are sometimes so narrow that when one idea meets another there, they knock their heads together; up above on the ceiling are innumerable hooks on which Jean Paul hangs a variety of thoughts, and along the walls are a great number of secret drawers in which feelings are hidden. No German writer is so rich in ideas and feelings, but he never allows them to ripen, and the riches of his mind and of his heart astonish rather than delight us. Thoughts and feelings which would grow up to be enormous trees if he allowed them to strike deep roots, if he let them spread their branches, flowers and leaves, these he plucks out of the ground when they have hardly grown up into little plants, or indeed have barely germinated, and whole forests of ideas are in this way set before us in an ordinary dish as a vegetable. Now this is an odd, indigestible kind of food, for not every stomach can stand such quantities of young oaks, cedars, palms and banyans. Jean Paul is a great poet and thinker, but it is impossible to be less of an artist in creating and thinking. In his novels he has brought truly poetic personages into the world, but all his offspring drag about with them a ridiculously long umbilical cord in which they get entangled and which finally strangles them. Instead of thoughts he gives us in reality the thinking itself, we witness the material functioning of his brain; he gives us, so to speak, more brain than thought. His witticisms, the fleas of his overheated mind, hop about in all directions. He is the merriest writer and at the same time the most sentimental. Indeed his sentimentality

invariably conquers him and his laughter is all of a sudden changed into weeping. Now and then he will dress up as a beggarly, awkward lout, but suddenly, just like the princes who travel *incognito*, whom we see on the stage, he undoes his shabby overcoat and we see the sparkling star on his breast."

How wonderfully Heine has here adapted his style to the nature of his subject! We almost think we are reading Jean Paul himself.

Heine has been blamed for treating Uhland, the head of the Swabian school, somewhat superciliously as "that excellent man," and neglecting to give due praise to his lyrics and ballads. As a matter of fact he gives unmerited praise to Uhland's dramas. As for the lyrics and ballads, he admits that twenty years before when he was a boy he adored Uhland and his brave knights and gentle squires and virtuous ladies, his monks and nuns and ancestral tombs, the sighs of yearning, the ringing of church bells and the eternal sobs of resignation, and as he sat amidst the ruins of the old castle of Düsseldorf he recited Uhland's ballad about the shepherd who fell in love with a king's daughter, greeted her every morning as he drove his lambs past the castle, and received her loving greeting in return until one morning she appeared no more. She was dead. Heine was deeply moved. If it so happened that he recited the poem towards dusk he would remember that according to tradition the very ruins in which he was sitting were haunted by a lady without a head. Often he heard her silken train rustle and his heart beat wildly.

"That," he says, "was the proper time and place to become enthusiastic about Uhland's poems. But since then twenty years have elapsed and I have heard and seen much and I no longer believe in headless people, and spectral apparitions no longer impress me. The house in which I am reading Uhland at this moment stands on the Boulevard Montmartre, where you can hear the breaking of the wildest waves of the day and the shrieking of the loudest voices of our modern times, the laughing and roaring and drumming; the national guard marches past at the double, and everybody speaks French. Is that a place where one can read Uhland's poems?" Uhland himself was no longer the

same, for twenty years he had not published any more medieval ballads, he had turned his mind to the practical needs of the day, had become a champion of the rights of the people, and to the poet's laurel he added the civic crown. "And when he noticed that his Pegasus was only a knight's charger which loved to trot back into the past, but became restive as soon as it had to go forward into modern life, the excellent Uhland dismounted with a smile, had the saddle taken off and the unruly horse taken to the stable. There it is to the present day, and like its colleague, the charger Bayard, it has all possible virtues and only one fault : it is dead."

The criticism of Uhland's ballads is superficial and frivolous, but it is so obviously so that no one can possibly be misled by it nowadays, nor prevented from enjoying it all the same. As for Heine's own times, it probably expressed pretty accurately what most people were thinking. The reading public had had a sickening surfeit of the medieval diet in prose and in verse. There always has been and always will be a great deal of the purely external, the conventional and artificial, about the evocation of the past which will cloy the palate sooner or later. About people who lived in a remote period of history all we can really know is what they did and how they dressed, what they looked like ; their mentality will in most cases remain an impenetrable mystery. The artificiality will be emphasized when writers like Uhland and Fouqué allow their own bourgeois notions of decorum and conventional pudicity to animate their resuscitated barbarians *virginibus puerisque*. The reader will come to suspect, as Heine did, that "the armour of these knights is made of tin, that they are stuffed with flowers instead of flesh and bone, and that they appeal more sweetly to delicate noses than the old swashbucklers who wore very heavy trousers of iron, who gorged themselves with food and drank even more immoderately."

Uhland did not allow his equanimity to be seriously disturbed by Heine's gentle sarcasm, but his faithful henchmen of the Swabian school were deeply hurt when they saw their chief's Pegasus treated as no more than

so much dead horse flesh, and before many years had passed they were rash enough to challenge the detractor to a literary combat which added but little to their glory.

If Uhland's friends were shocked at what, coming from Heine, was mild and innocuous banter, August Wilhelm Schlegel's partisans had good reason to be furious when they read the merciless onslaught on the man whose name had not so very long before been a household word throughout the literary world. Most people realized that Schlegel had outlived his reputation, but it required the fearless irreverence of a Heine to tell him so to his face. It is true Heine owed his former teacher some gratitude, and it is difficult to imagine that this account was settled in full by the lines :

Und dir, mein hoher Meister, soll ich's danken,
Wird einst das schwache Reislein Blüten tragen,¹

addressed by the student to his professor at Bonn. Heine's conscience is obviously not quite easy, for he considers it necessary to remind Schlegel at the outset that the poet Bürger, Schlegel's "literary father," had been treated with no more courtesy by Schlegel, that Schlegel, too, had followed the general custom, for in literature as in the forests of the North American savages the fathers are clubbed to death by the sons as soon as they have become old and weak.

Heine frankly acknowledges Schlegel's merits as a metrician, as a translator of Shakespeare and the initiator of an elegant and graceful style in the treatment of scientific subjects, but this is poor compensation for being told that he was a mere imitator of his brother Friedrich, that in the manifold activities in which he claimed distinction as a leader he had proved a mere dilettante and a bungler, and that he owed his reputation mainly to the unheard-of temerity with which he had attacked the literary authorities of the day, and his colossal ignorance in denying the existence of poetry in France.

¹ Elster, *Heines Werke*, vol. ii. p. 61.

"His refrain was always that the French were the most prosaic people in the world. And this he said at a time when he could still see many a choragus of the Convention, that great tragedy of the Titans, strutting about in the flesh; at a time when Napoleon improvised a good epic every day, when Paris was swarming with heroes, kings and gods. . . . Herr Schlegel, however, has seen nothing of all this; when he was here he kept looking at himself in a mirror; no wonder he saw no poetry in France."

From now on the attack becomes more and more personal. Schlegel had committed the imprudence of marrying a second time, and the disappointed bride had run away from him the day after the wedding, which gives Heine an opportunity of telling the story of the Egyptian god Osiris, his wife Isis and the wicked Typhon, a very amusing chapter from the Egyptian *chronique scandaleuse*, at least as told by Heine. Finally, he describes how the vain old fop revisits the scenes of his former triumphs, Berlin and Paris, and renders himself supremely ridiculous by his vanity and conceit. Heine saw him in Paris. "I thought I was seeing a spirit," he relates, "but it was only his body. His spirit is dead, but the body still haunts the earth. He has even become fat; his thin spiritualistic legs have put on flesh, you could even see a belly and above it a great number of decorations. The aristocratic little head of the old man was covered with a golden wig. He was dressed in the latest fashion of the year in which Mme de Staël died. He was smiling with the superannuated sweetness of an old lady who has a piece of sugar in her mouth and he moved about as youthfully as a coquettish child. A strange rejuvenation had taken place, he had experienced as it were a comic second edition of his youth."

We are assured by contemporaries that the description of the old Schlegel is fairly accurate, and but for the somewhat pungent imagery was merely a repetition of what everybody was saying. The annihilation of Schlegel's literary fame was a more serious matter, all

the more as it was done with such uncompromising thoroughness. The immediate provocation Heine received from Schlegel was a quatrain written by the latter and aimed undoubtedly at his former disciple :

Deinen Ernst kann ich nicht loben,
Schimpf gelingt dem Spötter nur,
Deine Begeisterung ist verschoben,
Deine Tücken sind Natur.

Heine's early over-estimation of Schlegel and the subsequent discovery of his hollow dilettantism in many directions may have been rankling in his heart, and this, though only the remote cause, furnishes probably the real explanation of his destructive criticism so picturesquely characterized by Keiter¹: "Heine condemns the teacher whose praises he had once sung so loudly to a long-drawn-out and painful death, and he carries out the execution personally. Yet he does not go quite as far as in the execution of Count Platen. With a cheerful smile, amidst pungent witticisms, and clad in a faultless dress suit and white kid gloves he conducts the victim to the scaffold and dispatches him with such amiable joviality into the other world, that the spectator thinks the culprit is bound to laugh with the rest of them." If in the last paragraph of the work Heine comes to the conclusion that not only in literature but also in politics this predilection of German Romanticism for the Middle Ages, which in France had purely artistic consequences, has, in Germany, been fraught with infinite mischief, he is undoubtedly right. His explanation of the difference of result is that in France the romantic evocation of the Middle Ages was harmless, because, owing to the great Revolution, the Middle Ages were for all practical purposes dead beyond recall, whereas in Germany the medieval spirit was still stalking ominously through both politics and religion.

In the *Romantische Schule*² he had referred to the

¹ H. Keiter, *H. Heine*, p. 91.

² Elster, *Heines Werke*, vol. v. p. 298.

complaint of some Frenchmen regarding the baneful influence of German philosophy on French politics and religion. He countered this charge by saying that what had hitherto been offered as German philosophy was not German philosophy at all, that especially the ingenious twaddle (*Wischiwaschi*) Victor Cousin had taught was anything but German philosophy, which, moreover, being purely transcendental, had nothing whatever to do with either religion or politics. To a further elaboration of this Heine devotes the six pages of the appendix. His method is peculiar. There is not a paragraph in this satire, not a line that is not apparently highly complimentary to Victor Cousin. He commends him as an admirer of Prussia, compares him to Napoleon, Alexander, Frederick the Great, stands aghast at the phenomenal intuition of the man who can lecture on Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* without knowing a word of German. When V. Cousin confesses that he has borrowed liberally from Schelling and Hegel, Heine assures him that he has done nothing of the kind, that he is a scrupulously honest man and that he has not pocketed a single idea of German philosophy. In this connection he tells of the man who accused himself of having stolen from the king's table merely to make people believe that he had been the king's guest. V. Cousin had not pocketed even a teaspoon of an idea. It is a little masterpiece of a satire written in the amusing and genial style of the *Romantische Schule*. That Heine disliked Cousin personally, not merely as a philosopher, is shown by what Mme Jaubert tells us about the meetings of Heine and Cousin at the villa of Princess Belgiojoso at Marly.

While Heine knew that he had written something he could well be proud of, he had considerable difficulty in persuading Campe even to publish the Hamburg edition. The idea of Heine begging Campe to undertake the task, and prepared, in case of ultimate refusal, to hawk the manuscript around among the publishers, appears to us nowadays ludicrous. At last Campe

consented, paying the author the usual contemptible pittance, on this occasion 1000 marks, and even that only after Heine had made a pathetic appeal to his heart as follows :

“I am your only classic, furnishing the only permanently saleable literary goods—why should I grind out the same old song again when you know it already? You know as well as I do that my books, whatever they may be, are bound to be republished again and again—so I repeat my request, show yourself a Christian with regard to the number of copies you print. O my dearest Campe, what would I not give if you had more religion! But the reading of my own writings has done your soul harm, you have lost that delicate religious feeling you once possessed. You no longer believe in achieving your salvation by good works, only trash is acceptable to you. You have become a Pharisee who sees in books nothing but the letter and not the spirit, a Sadducee who does not believe in a resurrection of books, in new editions, an atheist who reviles my holy name in secret. Oh, repent and reform.”

XVI

ZUR GESCHICHTE DER RELIGION UND PHILOSOPHIE IN DEUTSCHLAND

ENCOURAGED by what success the *Romantische Schule* had met with Heine immediately plunged into a task infinitely more thorny, and for which it will be readily understood he was far less qualified, the task of acquainting the French with the transcendental intricacies of German philosophical systems. His articles under the title, *De l'Allemagne depuis Luther*, appeared in 1834 in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, and in Germany under the title, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*. As it was written at the suggestion of Enfantin, the Saint-Simonian leader, to whom the French articles were dedicated, we may expect a strong Saint-Simonian bias. The whole trend of the work is Saint-Simonian. The object nearest to the author's heart was at the time to show that spiritualistic Christianity, the enemy of matter and of the senses, was dead in Germany and that that country was ripe for Saint-Simonism. He therefore confines himself to philosophic questions and systems of social and political importance, forgetting that shortly before that he had tried to calm French anxieties by assuring the readers of the *Romantische Schule* that German philosophy from the *Critique of Pure Reason* on has little connection with either religion or politics. He is particularly interested in those systems which explicitly or implicitly make religion appear as an enemy to be fought and conquered. No reader knowing this will expect a calm and objective exposition of the evolution of religious and philosophic ideas in Germany. He will nevertheless be interested in this clever and often very witty attempt to read

Saint-Simonism into the greater portion of German philosophy, and he will seek a scientific statement of German philosophy elsewhere. Heine himself has no illusions regarding the shallowness and incompleteness of his exposition. "Great German philosophers," he says, "who happen to glance at these pages, will contemptuously shrug their shoulders at the scantiness of all I lay before the reader, but I beg them to consider that everything I say is expressed clearly and intelligently, whereas their own works, while they are solid, immeasurably solid, very profound, stupendously profound, are just as unintelligible. Of what use to the people are locked and barred granaries to which they have no key? The people hunger after knowledge and will thank me for the morsel of spiritual bread which I honestly share with them."

What Heine has to say about German religion in the Middle Ages, apart from what he has already told us in the *Romantische Schule*, is meagre enough. He lightly touches on popular belief in witches, ghosts and goblins, and makes a few references to Church history: that is all until he comes to Luther, "the saviour of our noblest possessions, the creator of our language, the founder of our German literature." After a generous appreciation of the ethics of Protestantism and its contribution to the literature of thought, philosophy monopolizes his attention, and the remainder of his task is an account of the victorious onward march of the anti-religious philosophic systems, the insistence on the values of each system being in proportion to the real or supposed anti-religious character.

Besides, he selects from among the work of individual philosophers only that which seemed to show a tendency towards Saint-Simonism, neglecting the rest as unimportant. He will even tear single statements from their context, making them serve purposes altogether unintended by their author. Spinoza defining the pantheistic god as the one and only substance manifesting itself in infinite thought and infinite extension, that is to say

as both mind and matter, seems to Heine to lay the very foundation of Saint-Simonism, for it makes matter as important, as holy and as divine as mind, and "whoever offends the holy matter is as sinful as he who sins against the Holy Ghost."

Transferring the application of Spinoza's definition of God to the domain of politics, he attempts to show that Pantheists and Saint-Simonians are the closest of allies.

"We (Saint-Simonians) promote the well-being of matter, the material happiness of nations, not because like the materialists we despise the spirit, but because we know that the divinity of man manifests itself also in his bodily appearance and that misery destroys and degrades the body, the image of God, and that thereby the spirit, too, perishes. The maxim of the Revolution which Saint-Just pronounced, '*le pain est le droit du peuple*,' becomes with us '*le pain est le droit divin de l'homme*.' We do not fight for the human rights of the people, but for the divine rights of man. In this and in many other respects we differ from the men of the Revolution. We have no desire to be sansculottes, nor frugal citizens, nor cheap presidents. We are founding a democracy of gods equal in power, holiness and felicity. You are asking for simplicity in dress, frugal living and sobriety in pleasures: we, however, demand nectar and ambrosia, purple cloaks, costly perfumes, delights and luxury, dancing of laughing nymphs, music and comedies. Let this not displease you, oh virtuous republicans! Our reply to your censorious reproaches is what the fool in Shakespeare said: '*Do you imagine that because you are virtuous there should no longer be any cake and ale?*'"

Spinoza's statement of the illusory distinction between good and evil appears in Heine's rendering as a piece of ethical nihilism, merely because his quotation is incomplete. Of the sublime heights of thought to which Spinoza carries the student there is in Heine no precise exposition, only a vague poetic adumbration. "In reading Spinoza," he says, "we are invaded by a feeling such as that which fills us when we look upon the grandeur of nature in her state of living calm. A forest of thoughts reaching into heaven, the flowering tops in waving motion, while the immovable trunks are rooted

in the eternal earth. There is a breath going through Spinoza's writings which is inexplicable. We are surrounded by the breezes of the future. Perhaps the spirit of the Hebrew prophets still rests on their descendant. There is at the same time an earnestness in him, a self-conscious pride, a grandezza of thought, which also seems to be an heirloom; for Spinoza belongs to those martyr families which the most Catholic kings were then driving out of Spain." This is no doubt very beautiful, but we miss the very culminating point of Spinoza's ethical teaching, the precept to look upon all things "sub specie æternitatis," that is to say, on each individual thing, whether idea, body or event, as a connected link of an infinite whole and as proceeding eternally and necessarily from God; we miss above all the sublime philosophic resignation which results from such recognition. Where Spinoza is concerned, Heine is blindly intolerant of any adverse criticism, so, when on his way, he meets that most lovable of mystics, F. H. Jacobi, who dares to do his metaphysics with his heart rather than with his head, he tears and rends him with quite unmerited ferocity.

This Pantheism as expounded by Spinoza is, according to Heine, the religion of Germany. "It is the religion of our greatest thinkers," he says, "of our best artists, and deism was long ago overturned theoretically. It is there held only by the unthinking multitude and without any rational justification, like so many other things. Nobody says so, but everybody knows it. Pantheism is the public secret of Germany. Indeed we have outgrown deism. We are free and do not want a thundering tyrant. We are of age and do not need a paternal providence, nor are we the work of a divine mechanic. Deism is a religion for slaves, for children, for Genevans, for watchmakers."

Another example of Heine's method of selection is to be found in the portions dealing with Kant. The most important achievement of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was, according to Heine, the demolition of the three



HEINRICH HEINE, 1829

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proofs for the existence of the deity. "Since then," Heine says, "deism has vanished from the realm of speculative reason. This sad news may perhaps need several centuries to become generally known—we have long put on mourning. *De profundis!*" Heine is cheerfully resigned. When, however, Kant proceeds to show that while pure reason fails to furnish such proof for the existence of the deity, practical reason postulates God and the freedom of the will from the categorical imperative: this no longer suits Heine, so he ridicules this apparent recantation in a chapter which, though of course worthless as history of philosophy, is nevertheless one of the wittiest things he has written.

"You think you can go home now?" he says immediately after the passage quoted above. "By no means! there is going to be another performance. After the tragedy comes the farce. So far Kant has played the part of the inexorable philosopher, he has stormed the heavens, he has put the whole garrison to the sword, the sovereign of the world lies undemonstrated in his blood: there is no longer any divine mercy, nor divine paternal kindness, nor reward in another world for abstinence in this, the immortality of the soul is at the last gasp—you can hear the moaning and the death-rattle—and old Lampe (Kant's servant) stands there with his umbrella under his arm, a disconsolate spectator, cold sweat mingling with his tears is running down his face. Thereupon Immanuel Kant is moved by pity and shows that he is not only a great philosopher, but also a good man, and he considers and half-good-naturedly and half-ironically he says: 'Old Lampe must have a god, else the poor man cannot be happy—but man is to be happy on this earth—practical reason says so—very well then let practical reason guarantee the existence of God.' As the result of this argument Kant distinguishes between theoretical reason and practical reason, and with the latter, as with a magic wand, he resuscitated the corpse of deism, which theoretical reason had killed."

The demolition of the three proofs for the existence of God is a mere by-product of Kant's critical method which is the main achievement of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, but it is all that Heine required for the purpose of his work, "to keep before us those questions of philosophy that are of sociological importance and in the solution of which philosophy competes with religion."

Some of Heine's accounts of philosophic systems are of considerable length, such as the rambling but fascinating causerie on Fichte and the very clever dissection of Schelling; others are of disappointing brevity. He evidently despaired of elucidating Hegel to his French readers, for he contents himself with telling them that Hegel is the greatest philosopher Germany has produced since Leibnitz. We may suppose that even the sanguine Heine saw that there are limits to the popularization of metaphysical systems. This is only another proof, if another were required, of the peculiar character of this work: its importance lies not so much in what it gives us of the evolution of religious and philosophic ideas as rather in the view we get of Heine on a background of religion and philosophy.¹ It is to this personality of the author, which never entirely disappears from view, that the work owes its unity of impression, indeed, its originality. The greater part of his philosophy of history he owes to the Saint-Simonian *Enfantin*: the conception of the eternal antagonism of spiritualism and sensualism; the division of the history of humanity into a sensualistic, pagan period, a period of spiritualistic Judeo-Christian reaction and a pantheistic period which is to bring about a final reconciliation of spirit and matter. No doubt he carried these ideas beyond the scope of Saint-Simonism when, rightly or wrongly, he represented hostility to all religion, particularly the

¹ Some have attempted to vindicate the historical status of the book in spite of the defective and often erroneous statement of facts. "The question we ask of the historian," says Wolff, "is not what has been, but why it had to be so." Surely the "what" has first to be established with some degree of accuracy and certainty before we can go into questions of cause and effect.

Christian faith, as being the net result of the majority of the systems he describes.

Readers ready to disregard the somewhat deceptive title, and willing to enjoy what the author really gives them, will find this remarkable work infinitely more entertaining than most histories of philosophy, but they will find at the same time that in spite of Heine's occasionally very shallow knowledge of the subject which no amount of witty frivolity can cover up, he has every now and then with his phenomenal intuition succeeded in bringing into striking relief the characteristics of the more important systems. That his main preoccupation, however, was politics is shown by the eagerness with which he takes advantage of every opportunity to stray from the main subject, philosophy, and plunge headlong into politics. On one occasion, after a particularly protracted ramble in political regions, he has to pull himself up sharply and he exclaims: "Now let us talk about philosophy again!"

Another feature of his mode of presentation is the very lifelike portrayal of the personalities of the philosophers themselves and of the more striking incidents of their lives. This brings nearer to our hearts men who but for such information would remain as abstract as their systems. There is nothing more illuminating than his critical observations on the style of Lessing and of Kant, nor more striking than his parallel between Kant and Robespierre or Fichte and Napoleon.

He tells the French that in comparison with the Germans they are really very tame and moderate, that they could at most manage to kill a king who had already lost his head before he was decapitated, and they had to do that amidst so much drumming and screaming and stamping of feet that the whole earth shook; that Robespierre, the great man of their Revolution, had indeed his fits of destructive mania where royalty was concerned, but that he wiped the foam from his mouth and the blood off his hands as soon as the Highest Being was in question, when he would put on his blue Sunday

coat with the shining buttons and stick a nosegay in his buttonhole. "If Immanuel Kant," he continues, "this great destroyer in the domain of thought, far surpasses Robespierre in terrorism, yet he has several points of resemblance with the latter. We find in both the same inexorable, glacial, prosaic honesty; the same talent for distrust, only that the one exercised it against thoughts and calls it criticism, while the other employs it against men and calls it republican virtue. They both represent in the highest degree the type of the bourgeois: nature had destined them to weigh out sugar and coffee, but fate wanted them to weigh different things and placed in the scale of the one a king, in that of the other a god. And they gave the right weight."

"After the Kantians had accomplished their terroristic work of destruction, there appeared Fichte, just as Napoleon had come, after the Convention with its own critique of pure reason had also swept away the whole past. Napoleon and Fichte represent the great, inexorable Ego, with whom thought and action are identical, and the colossal structures they erected are witnesses of a colossal will. But by the very boundlessness of that will those structures crumble immediately and the *Wissenschaftslehre* just like the empire falls and vanishes as quickly as it arose."

The success of *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie* was not very great, a second edition was not required until 1852. Professional philosophers turned up their noses at this subjective conception of history, or they voiced their indignation at the irreverent treatment of philosophy and philosophers. His bitter attack on Christianity drew down on him the anathema of the orthodox. Few critics had the good sense of Menzel in the *Literary Supplement of the Morgenblatt*, who says, "that of all those who were building up political dreams of a utopian republic and a new sensual religion, Heine was the only one who treated the legend purely from a poetic angle, and who became enamoured of it as only a poet would. All that followed was the result of his fiction."

Heine's own opinion of his work was never a very high

one, and in the preface to the second edition in 1852, when he was lying on his mattress grave, he penned a thoroughly Heinesque recantation of some of the more extreme views expressed in 1834. "I should be pleased," he says, "if I could leave this second edition unpublished. Since the first time the work appeared my views have changed as regards many things, especially religious matters. Deism lives, and this cobweb Berlin dialectic cannot kill a cat, much less a god."

That a work which even Heine saw fit to recant was cruelly mutilated by the censor goes without saying.

XVII

MATHILDE

HEINE'S studies of the idealistic systems of German philosophy had not blinded him to the quite unusual physical charms of a nineteen-year-old girl who at the time sold boots and shoes in a shop owned by her aunt. He had met Crescence Eugénie Mirat, known throughout his life as Mathilde, in October 1834. The little grisette surrendered after a short but passionate wooing. That it was more serious than the transitory liaisons that had hitherto fallen to his lot appears clearly from his letters written many months later. He writes to Lewald in April 1835 :

"When I received your letter I was up to the neck in a love affair in which I am still entangled. Since October nothing has any importance for me that is not immediately connected with it. I neglect everything, I see nobody and at most I utter a sigh when I think of my friends. . . . Have you read the Song of Songs of King Solomon? Well, read it again and there you will find everything I could tell you to-day."

Or he writes to Campe in July of the same year :

"Fool that I am, I believed that the time of passion was over for me, I thought I could never again be dragged into the whirlpool of human passions, that I was like the eternal gods in calmness, wisdom and moderation—and lo! I raged again like a man, like a young man."

Most contemporaries, whether friends or foes, are agreed that she was strikingly pretty in spite of a somewhat low forehead. Lewald is a little more difficult to please, and describes her as a fat Frenchwoman of medium height, the typical *dame du comptoir*. On the other hand, it is just as generally admitted that she was

uneducated, some say incredibly ignorant and shallow. A short sojourn in a girls' private school to which Heine sent her was time and money wasted ; she was incapable of absorbing instruction. Heine considered it an advantage that she was ignorant of German literature and had not read a line written by him, by his friends or by his enemies. She was evidently equally resigned to remain ignorant. "I am told," Mathilde once said, "that Heine is a very clever man and has written some fine books. I know nothing about it and have to be satisfied to take people's word for it." Only on one occasion was she known to take up a volume of the French translation of her husband's works, and then with disastrous result. In turning over the pages she came across some love scene or other, and imagining that the author was relating a personal experience, she had such a fit of uncontrollable jealousy that Heine had the greatest difficulty in explaining the true state of affairs to her.

Her appeal to Heine was purely physical, but it lasted until the end of his life, and there was no cooling of his passion at any time. The very inanity of her superficial chatter charmed him, her ignorance amused him, and her anger made him laugh. The thought that she had no idea of his greatness as a poet and was utterly incapable of understanding a line of his verse tickled his vanity, for she obviously loved the man in him and not the poet, she loved him simply "*parce qu'il était bien.*"

At first he was far from contemplating a permanence of relations, he even made a determined attempt to break the fetters of the thralldom of his senses, but in vain, and just before a duel he had to fight in 1841 he married Mathilde.

Much has been said by friend and foe of the influence of this disparity between them on Heine's life and career. Heine was quite aware of this influence. "I am fated," he writes to Laube, "to love only what is most base and foolish. Can you understand how this thought must

torment a man who is proud and very clever ? ” And when he positively fled, panic-stricken, took refuge for several months in the castle of the Princess Belgiojoso and imagined the breach between himself and Mathilde to be final, he wrote to Campe : “ I believe my soul is now at last freed from all its dross ; my verse will be more beautiful and my books more harmonious. This I know, that at the present moment I have a perfect horror of everything that is turbid and ignoble, everything that is vulgar and corrupt.” But after having thus with his accustomed frankness acknowledged Mathilde’s worse than mere inferiority he again came under the sway of this child who, not content with having the intelligence of a child affected to dress and speak like one. Heine remained not only the passionate but also the jealous lover to the end, and though he was often tortured by the hellish pangs of jealousy, no one, not even the censorious Alexandre Weill, has ever dared to suggest that his doubts were justified.

As a sick-nurse during Heine’s many years of suffering she was not an unqualified success. That she left her patient often alone for many hours to go to theatres and concerts is, however, not to be set down against her, for she had to go out to escape for a time from the depressing suggestiveness of the sick-room. Her cheerfulness and vivacity acted as a tonic on Heine and would undoubtedly have been seriously impaired without frequent periods of relaxation. On the other hand her way of manifesting sympathy on her return from these excursions, as reported by Alfred Meissner, is peculiar. “ *Voyons, as-tu souffert beaucoup ? oui ? Voyez ce pauvre chéri !* ” She might shed a little tear and would then gaily escape into an adjoining room to look after her parrot, who received her with joyful screeches which combined with Mathilde’s unrestrained laughter would create precisely the conditions the poor nervous wreck, her husband, should be protected from. On other occasions, when Mathilde’s clear voice was heard coming from the next room, Heine would break off his con-



MATHILDE HEINE

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versation with his visitor and listen, a cheery smile would light up his face and he would listen until the voice was silent.

The analogous case of Goethe and Christiane Vulpius suggests itself irresistibly to the reader. Goethe, too, had entered into a free relationship with a young woman immeasurably his inferior whom he ultimately married, but there the analogy begins and ends. Goethe never allowed himself to be dragged down to Christiane's level intellectually, morally or socially. We can hardly say that Goethe was made to suffer for his association with Christiane. On the other hand the self-indulgent, highly erotic Heine's health, which was never of the strongest, undoubtedly suffered through his unequal mating with the robust young girl; the more select literary and social circles were closed to his impossible wife and, worst of all, Mathilde's inordinate and unscrupulous prodigality¹ kept Heine permanently on the verge of bankruptcy, obliging him to work with feverish haste and to do literary hackwork often unworthy of his pen, thus wasting his powers and wearing out his strength. With the exception of three beautiful poems : *An die Engel*, *Babylonische Sorgen* and *Ich war, oh Lamm, als Hirt bestellt*, which we owe to his love for her, there is nothing to be set down to the credit of Mathilde as a source of inspiration.

Fanny Lewald, who knew her well, says in her *Erinnerungen an Heinrich Heine* : " I am willing to believe that Frau Heine did all she could, that she loved her husband as well as she could, but try as I might I have never been able to see in her anything but the most shallow externality. I have known girls of the common people in Paris who were vastly superior to her in qualities of the heart, in refinement of feeling and in good manners. It was a very noble trait in Heine that he sought to raise his wife in the esteem of others, for he must have missed much at her side if my feeling does not deceive me, and I do not believe it does." While the

¹ For instances see Hirth's Introduction to Heine's *Briefwechsel*, vol. i.

opinion of one woman about another has as a rule to be taken *cum grano salis*, this particular judgment probably comes as near to the truth with regard to both Heine and Mathilde as any outsider can come. In the end the question whether Heine was happy with Mathilde, no matter whether he could have been still happier with another or not, must be answered by Heine himself. His answer is given categorically in his letters to Mathilde which only a person blinded by prejudice can misinterpret, and by the confession to Fanny Lewald :

“I have an excellent wife,” he says, “whom I have loved unspeakably and for thirteen years have called my own without hesitating a minute, without a moment in which I loved her less, without jealousy, in unchanging mutual understanding and in the fulness of freedom. Even now I am often terrified during my sleepless nights by the memory of that happiness, I thrill with rapture at the thought of this fulness of happiness.”

Not even the knowledge of some stormy incidents in their relations can lessen our conviction that Heine asked for nothing better. He showed his good sense by resting content with the good qualities Mathilde possessed : her cheerfulness, her sense of humour, and her childlike heart, and he did not grieve over what she was quite unfit to give him : genuine sympathy with the poet's aspirations, his triumphs and his failures, and the comfort of a noble woman in sickness and in suffering.

XVIII

ARID POLEMICS

HEINE'S friends who had imagined *Schnabelewopski* to be the latest expression of his genius were deeply concerned when they saw the poet stray so lamentably, as they thought, from all they had admired in the *Buch der Lieder*. If straying there was, it surely was no absolutely new form of aberration. Already the *Buch der Lieder* had contained songs of sexual realism, some of them so frank that they were omitted from later editions, and even with these omissions there is enough of the erotic element left to show us a Heine very closely related in trend of thought and feeling to the author of the *Schnabelewopski*, and just as likely to shock some good souls as the long "Gedankenstrich" in the latter work, standing, according to Heine, for a black sofa, the scene of an incident the author refuses to divulge just to spite the good souls.

For another reason some of his French friends, like Philarète Chasles and Sainte-Beuve, began to feel uneasy on Heine's account; they regretted the use to which he put his genius, his journalistic and purely polemical work, and they begged him to remain a poet. The warning was not uncalled for. Heine had entered on a period extending over a number of years when, often through no fault of his own, he is engaged in barren controversy with political, literary and personal foes—controversy of so ephemeral an interest, yet at the time so all-absorbing, that the artist is apparently completely swamped by it.

His first tilt was at the journalist and literary historian, Wolfgang Menzel. When Menzel bestowed his approval on *Schnabelewopski* it was his last eulogistic review of a

work of Heine's. Soon after this the tie of friendship and mutual admiration which had bound them together so long snapped suddenly, and Menzel seemed to see not only Heine but the other writers of the Young Germany movement in an entirely different light. An abyss of strong religious conviction, much deeper than he had realized before, had always marked him as not really belonging to that group of young men, and when the full significance of the antagonism burst upon him his former friendship turned into the fanatic envenomed hostility so characteristic of cases of religious antagonism. Such had hitherto been his confidence in the soundness of the political propaganda of these young men that he had actually engaged one of them, Gutzkow, as assistant editor on the *Literaturblatt*, of which he was editor-in-chief. It was possibly this intimate association with his subordinate which led to the unpleasant revelation of their incompatibility. Possibly also the religious divergence was aggravated later by the jealousy of the business man, the *Brotneid*, for when Gutzkow turned his back on the *Literaturblatt* and, with much sound of trumpets, announced the launching of the *Deutsche Revue*, to which the leading minds of Germany were to contribute and which, had it been carried to a successful issue, would have seriously threatened the pre-eminence of the *Literaturblatt*, the last scales fell from Menzel's eyes, he saw his former associates in all their moral repulsiveness and their irreligious turpitude, and he denounced them to the Federal Diet as enemies of religion, morality and the State.

Prompt action on the part of the Diet was rendered easy by the reactionary movement which had set in with renewed vigour after the alarming success of the July Revolution in France. The Church which, in any case, was hand-in-glove with all forms of reaction, could be relied on in any measure aimed at the suppression of free thought, and the bourgeois class had really been deeply shocked at the new morality set forth in some of the works of Gutzkow, Mundt and Heine. Austria and

Prussia vied with each other, cudgelling their brains to devise the most wildly reactionary measures. The blow fell in December 1835, and, though the resolution of the Diet left considerable latitude to individual states, it aimed at the prohibition not only of what the writers of Young Germany had already written, but also what they might write in the future. Only Heine, Gutzkow, Laube, Mundt and Wienbarg were mentioned in the resolution, but, of course, it applied to all writers of similar tendencies. As only one of the five writers mentioned in the resolution was a Jew, namely Heine, there was no antisemitic motive underlying the action of the Diet, and Treitschke's later attempt to hold up the Young Germany group to public reprobation as a Jewish group is an arithmetical absurdity.

In taking this drastic action the government gave proof of extraordinary dulness, ignorance of human nature, and particularly of the political mentality of Germany. It was a grave error to look upon the liberal opposition as a real source of danger to public stability. Where there was anything resembling a liberal party it lacked consolidation and cohesion. Besides, German liberals held doctrines as nebulous and harmless as the Milky Way, and were entirely without any definite plan of action. Having eloquently advocated a unified Germany, they were as a rule perfectly satisfied, and never worried as to the ways and means of bringing this about.

Particular thoroughness in carrying the regulation into effect was to be expected on the part of Prussia. Mundt was not even allowed to contribute scientific articles to reviews, and Hoffmann and Campe, who had been publishing a great deal of matter obnoxious to the government, had the whole of their output from higher mathematics down to nursery rhymes excluded from Prussian territory. Had not some of the states been guilty of considerable laxity in the application of the law, and had not Campe shown indefatigable ingenuity in outwitting the Prussian frontier-guards, the unfortunate

writers would have had to take to breaking stones for a living. While some of his fellow-martyrs were diplomatic or conciliatory in meeting the blow, Heine remained firm as a rock; he refused to compromise, demanded the right to defend himself before the Diet, and, scornfully declining to submit any of his writings to any Prussian censor, he aided Campe in concocting schemes to smuggle them uncensored into the enemies' country.

Heine, although advised by friends to thunder and fulminate, addressed a very moderate and dignified protest, or, as he calls it, a request to the Federal Diet. He gives expression to his astonishment that he should have been accused, tried and condemned, without being heard, without presence of counsel, without even a summons to appear.

"This," he says, "was not the mode of procedure of the Holy Roman Empire, whose place you are taking; Dr Martin Luther of glorious memory was provided with a safe-conduct, and could appear before the Imperial Diet to defend himself freely and publicly against all charges. . . . If you, gentlemen, are not willing to grant me a safe-conduct to defend myself before you in person, then grant me at least the necessary freedom to defend myself in print, by withdrawing the interdiction which at present is laid on everything I write. These words are not a protest but a request. If I protest against anything it is against the opinion of the public, who might mistake my enforced silence for an admission of ideas of a culpable tendency or even a recantation of my writings. As soon as I have been granted freedom of speech I shall prove that my writings do not proceed from an irreligious or immoral caprice but from a truly religious and moral synthesis, a synthesis accepted not only by the writers of Young Germany but long recognized by our most celebrated authors, poets as well as philosophers."

He ends his address with the assurance of his profound respect for the laws of the fatherland and the members of the Federal Diet, an assurance, he adds, he can give all the more freely as his residence outside the jurisdiction of the Diet will preclude all danger of misinterpretation.

We hardly recognize Heine in this calm and logical

statement of his complaint, but nobody could mistake the author of a letter Campe received from Heine a few days after the petition had arrived in Frankfurt.

“ I thought it necessary to stroke the old wigs a little, and my childlike, syrupy, submissive letter will have made a good impression. The Federal Assembly will be deeply touched. Everybody treats them like dogs, hence my courtesy and polite treatment will please them all the more. Messieurs! Vos Seigneuries! They never got such a thing before! Ah, they will say, there is a man who feels humanely, who does not treat us like dogs! And that excellent man we were going to persecute! this man we denounced as irreligious and immoral! And thirty-six pocket-handkerchiefs will be moistened with Federal tears! ”

Heine was not far mistaken regarding the impression his petition produced on the minds of some at least of the delegates, and while there is no record of tears being shed by that pretty hard-hearted assembly, we know that the Federal resolution was in full vigour for a comparatively short time only. Of course the censors throughout Germany remained on the qui-vive when handling Heine's works, which was bad enough.

Menzel, who had so fatefully turned against his former companions in arms, now became himself the target of the penalized writers. Heine wrote what was to be the preface to the third volume of the *Salon*, but had to be published separately under the title *Über den Denunzianten*. Its openly avowed object was to provoke a duel with Menzel, who, however, declined to be drawn into a fight with lethal weapons, with which he was less familiar than he was with the pen, which, it must be admitted, he handled uncommonly well. Gutzkow had already challenged him and had failed. Menzel had chosen his battleground and had expressed himself well satisfied with it.

Über den Denunzianten really amounts to nothing more than a return of the arrows he had received from Menzel. Heine had been charged with want of patriotism, morals and religion. Very cavalierly he

rules Menzel out of court as a defender of throne and altar.

“Strange,” he says, “it is always religion, always morality and always patriotism with which scamps palliate their attacks ! They never attack us from shady private interest, from literary envy or on account of an innate servility, but in order to vindicate God, good morals and the fatherland. Herr Menzel, who for many years, during which he was Gutzkow’s friend, had with an aching and a silent heart looked on while religion was in deadly danger, suddenly saw clearly that Christianity was irretrievably lost, if he did not speedily seize his sword and thrust it from behind in Gutzkow’s heart. . . .”

Thereupon he disposes of Menzel’s championship of Christianity by asking him if he considers himself a better Christian than Gutzkow.

“Does he believe all that is in the Bible ? Has he always strictly carried out the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount ? Has he always forgiven his enemies, especially those who play a more brilliant part in literature than he does ? Did he turn the other cheek when Frankh, the bookseller, slapped his face, or, in popular parlance, gave him a whack on the snout ? (‘eine Maulschelle’).”

All of which is neither very original nor particularly relevant, indeed a trifle heavy. His touch is lighter when he defends himself against Menzel’s charge of immorality.

“Is Menzel, of Stuttgart, the inexorable guardian of morals, really so very virtuous ? I will not deny Herr Menzel’s claim to a certain physical morality. In Stuttgart it is easy to be moral. God knows it is much harder in Paris. There is something peculiar about vice. Virtue everyone can practise by himself, he needs no one to help him, but for vice you have to be two. When he wishes to flee vice Herr Menzel is admirably helped by his exterior. I have too high an opinion of the good taste of vice to believe that it would ever run after a Menzel. Poor Goethe was not so happily endowed, so he could not always be virtuous. The Swabian School should prefix Herr Menzel’s portrait to their next issue of the *Musen Almanach* ; it would be very instructive. The public would see immediately that he

does not look like Goethe. And to their still greater surprise they would notice that this champion of Germanism, this hero of German nationalism, does not at all look like a German, but like a Mongol, every cheekbone a Kalmuck!"

Heine writes more to the point when he denies Menzel the possession of what he calls the characteristic German virtues of decency to the weak and defenceless, and physical courage. There he becomes relevant, and he can base his strictures on facts. When Menzel attacked his former friend Gutzkow, the latter was serving a three months' term in prison for publishing *Wally, die Zweiflerin*, and Menzel's steady refusal to give satisfaction to his victims by fighting duels gave him at least the appearance of being a coward, and Heine, who never in his life refused a challenge, naturally made the most of it.

Of course this fierce personal attack settled nothing; the public were amused and nothing more. Immature as Germany was politically, the people had progressed beyond the point of believing that political, not to mention moral and religious, questions can be decided by personalities, no matter how witty and pyrotechnics of style, no matter how dazzling. The Germans were even at that time far more *zielbewusst* than Heine gave them credit for, although they may have been in a dense fog with regard to ways and means of achieving their ideals.

The opposition to Heine as materialized in the strong measures of the government was not merely political in character, at the root of it there was really the revolt of the bourgeois element whom Heine had managed, by word and deed, to shock beyond endurance. So had Goethe, who had entered into a free alliance with a woman vastly his inferior. Indeed he had gone much further than Heine, who lived with Mathilde in cosmopolitan Paris, where such unions were the order of the day. Goethe had ridden rough-shod over the respect due to the court and the proprieties of a gossipy little town like Weimar. In literary sexual realism, too,

Goethe had outdone Heine in his *Venetian Epigrams*. In religion he was known to be a "decidirter Nicht-Christ," and his total lack of patriotism and ill-timed cosmopolitanism had scandalized all good patriots at the time of the Wars of Liberation. But the two men differed fundamentally in the manner of doing and saying the things that shocked. There was about Goethe's conduct, as there was about his writings, no matter whether they met with approval or not, a certain aristocratic hauteur and artless distinction utterly wanting in the roturier Heine, and if his views ran counter to public opinion he showed reserve and discretion in expressing them. Such pronouncements as "Ich bin ein decidirter Nicht-Christ" and Goethe's "Schüttelt nur an euren Ketten, der Mann (Napoleon) ist euch zu gross; ihr werdet sie nicht zerbrechen," were mere *obiter dicta* which with Heine would have become the main burden of a journalistic article read by the man in the street, who perhaps had never even heard of the *Venetian Epigrams*, and set forth with an obtrusive brilliancy, an abundance of offensive personalities and an irritating superiority of wit that left the other side breathless and with a humiliating feeling of helplessness.

What, however, went perhaps even more against Heine was the unforgivable Jew, and the fact that he had deliberately elected to live in France, the home of the *Erbfeind*. This at once stamped him as a foreigner, from whom criticism of home affairs is always taken particularly ungraciously. That he was a Jew and a *Franzosenfreund* was indeed often all that the strictures on Heine amounted to. In these two words the bourgeois resentment had found the rope to hang the dog with. No man could at that time sink lower than to be a *Franzosenfreund* and a Jew, for as such he was bound to be irreligious, immoral and unpatriotic.

Of all the bitter attacks made on Heine about 1838 he took public notice of one only, Gustav Pfizer's *Heines Schriften und Tendenz*. To this he replied in his *Schwabenspiegel*, which conferred an unenviable

immortality on the reckless Pfizer, who had already been cruelly mauled in *Atta Troll*.

The Swabian poets, the most eminent of whom were Uhland and Mörike, had among their camp-followers a number of third and fourth-rate writers like Karl Mayer, Gustav Pfizer and Gustav Schwab, whose bourgeois ethics, the "sittlich-religiöse Bettlermantel," as Goethe called it, and lack of poetic inspiration, would have been an easy mark for any critic who was looking for a victim to practise his wit upon. For some time past there had been little love lost between Heine and the Swabian poets. In Heine's modernized version of the Tannhäuser legend he makes no secret of his contempt for them, as shown by a very offensive stanza beginning :

In Schwaben besah ich die Dichterschul.

In his assault on Menzel there occurred the passage :

"I can no longer produce a decent poem ; so the little poets of Swabia, instead of being wrathful should rather receive me fraternally into their school. I suppose this will in any case be the end of the farce some day, that I shall sit on a little bench in the Swabian School beside the rest of them, and I shall sing of the fine weather, the delights of May, the spring sun, the little violets and the plum-trees."

The references were not complimentary, but little harm was done, and the admirers of the Swabian poets would probably continue to enjoy even the frugal fare provided by the lesser lights among these writers. The relations between Heine and the Swabians were not improved when, in 1837, the Swabians publicly and as a body boycotted the *Musenalmanach*, which had proposed to give Heine's portrait as a frontispiece. What really, however, made the clash inevitable, was the fundamental difference in their outlook on life and poetry. This is brought out unmistakably in Pfizer's article, which is really a highly instructive statement of some of the reasons for the contemporary opposition to

Heine. If very few Heine students read it nowadays that is due not only to its inordinate length of eighty pages, but also to its incredibly involved style.

Pfizer's standpoint is mainly ethical and is asserted in the tone of a schoolmaster. That Heine should pay no attention whatever to the admonitions, objections and advice of literary critics but persist in being original is a crime not to be forgiven. Obviously there is no chance that he will ever reflect and turn over a new leaf. Sentence of outlawry is then pronounced on him; any critic is henceforth to be allowed to shoot him at sight. This is the burden of the introductory part. That Heine's apparently careless verse form should be mistaken for the result of a want of artistic earnestness is amusing in the light of what we know of Heine's painstaking method of work, but it is strange that Pfizer should have set down ego-centric ethical nihilism as characterizing Heine specially, when in reality it was the distinguishing mark of the whole romantic movement. There is some sound criticism affecting minor matters in Pfizer's article and a certain amount of truth in the concluding sentence: "To satisfy a frivolous whim, for the sake of effect and show, Heine would never hesitate to open Pandora's box and leave not even hope within."

The *Schwabenspiegel* is, like so many of Heine's polemical writings, very witty in parts, largely irrelevant and mainly personal. It is characteristic of his method that he should set out with the evident intention of executing judgment on the whole of the Swabian School, that he should then pick out the least distinguished: Schwab, Kerner, Mayer and Pfizer, dispose of them with consummate ease, then drag in the Hungarian Lenau, who was nationally, poetically and morally as un-Swabian as any man could possibly be. It so happened that he was at the time on a visit to some of the Swabians and so was executed, we may suppose, along with his hosts on the principle of *mitgefangen, mitgehangen*. Heine makes some superficial observations on Mörike, whose verse he

frankly confesses he has not read, and then places Menzel on the pillory once more for the delectation of his readers. This return to the quarry almost looks as if Heine was feeling uneasy as to the efficacy of his first attack. When he had pulverized Platen he never felt the need to return to his victim. Pfizer's strictures on his writings he dismisses in a reply of a few pages, part of which is very much to the point. Finally he makes some kind of *amende honorable* to Uhland for what he had said and omitted to say in the *Romantische Schule*. This reparation amounts to an assurance that Uhland is too good for the company he keeps, which must have pleased Uhland as little as that other remark resuscitated from the *Romantische Schule*, true though it was, that his poetry belongs to the romantic tradition of Tieck, Schlegel and Fouqué, but that, as he has not written anything for twenty years, he evidently has the good sense to know that he is dead. How ridiculous to see the Swabians drag the dead man from his tomb, set a baby bonnet on his head and make him sit in their cramped little schoolroom—how absurd to see them set their defunct hero, fully armed, on a tall charger, as the Spaniards did their Cid, and let him tilt at the infidels who despise the Swabian School!

“It is bad enough,” he says, “to fight against the living; these at least you can fight until the combatants sink to the ground and bleed to death. But the dead, they tire us rather than wound us.”

If he fought Uhland he would fight the dead like

“the gay young knight with rosy cheeks and golden hair who rode into an enchanted wood and in the exuberance of his strength and courage called out: ‘Who is he that will conquer me?’ At last he meets a tall knight with closed visor, a rusty armour and a badly notched sword, who accepts the challenge. They fight and the leaves fall from the trees, and the trees stand leafless and shivering, they come into bud again and burst into leaf in the sunshine, and the seasons follow one another, but the two combatants fight without ceasing, with merciless fury at first, then less vehemently, until at last from sheer fatigue they lower

their swords and, exhausted, raise their visors. It was a melancholy sight! the challenged knight was a dead man and from the open visor grinned a fleshless skull. The other knight, who had entered the woods a blithe young knight, now had the wan pale face of an old man and his hair was white as snow. And from the tall trees came the scoffing, giggling and laughter of ghostlike birds."

Heine was becoming keenly aware of the utter futility and wastefulness of this kind of literary warfare. Still he went on.

That a born scrapper like Heine should find himself at war with the Swabians, who were setting virtue above genius and patriotism above artistic excellence, was natural enough, and not likely to cause him much loss of sleep, but the defection of friends and companions-in-arms was a more serious matter. Gutzkow, who owed a good portion of his literary fame to Heine's persistent and friendly trumpeting,¹ had been much upset by the action of the Federal Government. It would be an exaggeration to say that he had come to heel as a result of the three months' meditation in the prison of Mannheim, as has been suggested, and that he was now ready to eat out of the hand that had chastised him. It must, nevertheless, be admitted that his period of liberal militancy had come to an end. His *Wally, die Zweiflerin* was his last attempt to advocate the rehabilitation of the flesh. While in prison he had written a book on Goethe, and the purely literary works by which he is still known, like *Uriel Acosta*, *Zopf und Schwert* and *Das Urbild des Tartüffe*, belong to the subsequent period. His main reason for abstaining henceforth from direct political and ethical propaganda was probably that he was really more attracted by poetic literature, though it is obvious that the Federal decree made this abstention appear all the more desirable; starvation held as little charm for Gutzkow as it did for the rest of Young Germany.

Apart from this apparent political lukewarmness there

¹ See, for instance, Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, December 19, 1837.

was something else which affected Heine more painfully. Gutzkow had become the editor of Campe's *Telegraph für Deutschland* and the same publisher's *Jahrbuch für Literatur*. Without any provocation on Heine's part Campe's publications became under Gutzkow's editorship the leading organs in the campaign of slander and disparagement waged against Heine. Gutzkow had probably less responsibility for much that appeared than Heine imagined, as has been shown by Houben,¹ though the sensitive poet, always intolerant of criticism, might well feel hurt by Gutzkow's review of the *Schwaben-spiegel*, in which he maintains that Heine's friends had expected something better, that the Swabians were not as bad as Heine had painted them, and called Heine's weapons stage daggers and tin swords. This, of course, did not necessarily mean more than a divergence of views with regard to methods of criticism; what is less comprehensible is that Campe should have looked on apparently unconcerned while his own periodical journals were systematically belittling the genius of his best seller.

The first clash came when Heine attempted to discover who was the mutilator of the text of the *Schwaben-spiegel*, which had appeared in the *Jahrbuch für Literatur*: Gutzkow, Campe or the censor. This led to *Erklärungen*, a whole string of vexations and annoyances, until as the net result the public had lost all interest in the point at issue, and Heine's nerves were on edge.

"How I envy you your solitude," he writes to Laube, "I who am condemned to live in the wildest whirlpool of the world, and cannot find myself, and am deafened by the screaming distress of the day, and am tired like a baited bull, not to say like a dog—how I yearn for a quiet German fortress with a sentry at my door who would admit no one, neither the woman I love nor the other torments—I yearn passionately for solitude." ❸

Among these "torments" the worst and most inexcusable was Campe, and it says much for Heine's sanity

¹ H. H. Houben, *Jungdeutscher Sturm und Drang*, pp. 156 ff.

that it never gave way under the stress of his dealings with the unspeakable Hamburg publisher. Apart from the pitiful fees Campe paid his best seller, his inattention to Heine's often urgent inquiries, the delay in having his works printed, his carelessness in the choice of censors, and his own unpardonable and absurd mutilations of what Heine had written would have tried the patience and nervous endurance of a man possessing a perfectly sound and well-balanced nervous system. What it must have meant to Heine we can hardly imagine.¹ The letters he addressed about this time to Campe furnish pathetic reading² and fill us with admiration for his self-restraint and the almost incomprehensible loyalty he wastes on his tormentor. While Campe was no doubt the prince of smugglers of forbidden literature and had from time to time to face losses due to confiscation, his profits were still such as to tempt other publishers to make Heine more generous offers for the right of publication, especially the right to publish a complete edition of his works. Heine could, before the Federal decree came into operation, have sold this privilege to another firm for 80,000 frs., but had finally to make a present of it to Hoffmann and Campe for a paltry 20,000 frs.,³ at a time when he was in financial distress.

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, March 31, 1833.

² *Ibid.*, December 19, 1838.

³ *Ibid.*, March 24, 1839.

XIX
BÖRNE

NOT only was the interest of the public in the Gutzkow-Campe controversy absolutely gone, but the apathy with regard to Heine himself was becoming more and more marked, and that not without reason. The interpreter of France and Germany was silent, the political exile had ceased to excite pity, and the poet was as dead as Uhland when, like a bolt from the blue, the book on Ludwig Börne burst upon the German readers.

As in most of his controversies Heine showed in this book, too, an almost grotesque faculty for putting himself in the wrong after being more or less in the right to begin with. The book is one of the most remarkable works of the world's polemical literature. The fundamental idea of the vindication of his own political standpoint, and a retaliation for wrong he had suffered at the hands of a spiteful political opponent, was not only justifiable, but commendable; the effect, however, of publishing this attack on Börne three years after the death of the victim was most unfortunate, all the more so as Heine not only assails Börne, the politician, but Börne, the private man, in relations that are nobody's business but his own. This is all the more regrettable as the attack on the latter added but little to the effectiveness of the criticism of the former.

It is now generally admitted that the greater portion of the punishment Börne received was richly deserved. The two had been friends until they got to know each other more intimately, when they saw how very little they had in common. As soon as Börne understood how averse Heine was to joining the group of doctrinaire

radicals residing in Paris his attitude toward his fellow-exile changed completely. After their very first meeting in Paris in 1831 Börne wrote to his friend Jeannette Wohl: "I don't like Heine . . . he has no soul." And in the same letter: "Heine is said to be leading a coarsely dissolute life." From now on Börne's study becomes the clearing-house for a great many of the ill-natured reports that were spread throughout Germany regarding Heine's private life, his political activity, and his relations with other writers. In subsequent letters Börne's remarks on Heine become more and more spiteful and cantankerous, although the two seem to be on friendly terms on the few occasions when they meet. Heine becomes an obsession to Börne: "I must speak of Heine again," he writes in October of the same year; "do not imagine that it gives me pleasure to speak ill of him, but he certainly interests me as a writer and therefore as a man. I collect everything others tell me about him or that I observe myself. . . . A weak character like Heine is bound to degenerate in Paris. I see him on the downgrade, and in the interest of history and anthropology I shall dog his steps." Or he writes on another occasion: "Heine is being chemically analysed by me; he never suspects that I am continually making experiments with him." As a result of the unverified rumours he sedulously collects, and of his "chemical experimentation," he presents Jeannette Wohl, and ultimately Germany, with a portrait of Heine which is far from flattering, and soon became the prototype of the abusive news items with which German newspaper readers were regaled for many years. It was a portrait of Heine, the gambler, the companion of loose women, the coward, the venal politician and the snob.

Hitherto Börne had carried on his campaign¹ against Heine secretly, and except that Heine missed the good-humoured cordiality of the visit to Frankfurt, he had

¹ See a concise statement of Börne's conduct in R. Fürst, *H. Heines Leben und Werke*, pp. 417-21.

no reason to suspect Börne of hostile activities, but Börne came out openly against his brother exile when, towards the end of 1832, he published his *Briefe aus Paris*, containing a slashing criticism of Heine the man, the politician and the writer. The breach now became inevitable and irremediable. Börne, not content with having dealt his former friend a most effective blow, insisted on irritating the painful wound by deliberately seeking opportunities to meet his victim, frequenting the restaurants where Heine took his meals, whereas formerly he had rather avoided him.

It sounds paradoxical after this to say that Börne was really a very kind-hearted man, but it is nevertheless true. He had, however, one defect, which on occasion gave him an appearance of harshness, bordering on ferocity, and made him see red : he was constitutionally incapable of understanding how anyone could possibly be in disagreement with him. His political theories were so simple that he thought their very simplicity should infallibly carry conviction. Anyone disagreeing with him fell at once under a strong suspicion of being either devoid of character, or a coward, or immoral or he had been bribed. Börne would admit of no other explanation. The radical exiles of whom he was the undisputed head were all tarred with the same brush, and close association with such elements was out of question for the more flexible and far-sighted Heine, who looked upon all dogmatizing in politics as a mark of incurable stupidity, who, besides, had strong æsthetic objections to the childishly ignorant, unwashed, malodorous crowd he was supposed to consort with. He felt that a republic set up by such fanatics would be a thing stripped of all joy, brightness and beauty. The energy of the Paris German radicals was often very embarrassing. They had a perfect mania for trying to settle world affairs by petitions, protests and pronouncements. Subscription lists were opened for a great variety of political objects. When Heine attended their meetings he was invariably asked to sign one or other of

these documents. Escape was impossible, as some of the terrorists would stand over him, watch him closely, and threaten him with the guillotine which might overnight become the order of the day.¹

Either because of a partial agreement with their views or because he felt them to be possessed of power to do him harm, he had, even after a formal rupture, made considerable and, as it turned out, perfectly useless concessions to them in his writings, to which he, probably rightly, attributed most of his embarrassments with the German Governments. These futile, humiliating surrenders of his better convictions had rankled in his heart for years, and when after Börne's death there was super-added the fantastic glorification of the dead leader, Heine could stand it no longer, and he wrote his book in which through their leader he struck a deadly blow at the whole group of intransigent German republicans.

That in so doing he should become personal was inevitable. It was all very well for Laube, who was shown the manuscript, to entreat Heine to remain objective and steer clear of personalities. Heine could not help being personal; he abhorred the purely abstract, and had little use for the thought apart from the thinker. We have already seen how in *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie* the presentation of the personality of the philosopher had to go hand in hand with the exposition and the appreciation of his system. How thoroughly subjective Heine felt it necessary to be in this as in everything else he did is shown by the following.² After Laube had been reading to Heine one dangerous passage after another from the manuscript, Heine, who seemed to be only half listening, said: "But isn't it well expressed?" "Possibly," replied Laube, "but it is out of place!" "But isn't it true?" Heine asked again. "No," was the reply, "in this connection it is not true." "Excuse me," said Heine, "in my connection it is thoroughly true; I cannot write as things are connected

¹ K. Gutzkow, *Börnes Leben*.

² G. Karpeles, *Heinrich Heine, aus seinem Leben und seiner Zeit*.

in you, I cannot write your books." There was no answer to that, as indeed there could be none.

Heine's *Ludwig Börne, eine Denkschrift*, begins with an account of the first meeting with Börne in Frankfurt. It is a wonderful piece of exposition, an apparently good-humoured sketch to begin with of Börne's character, his peculiarities of mind and of body, his humour contrasted with Jean Paul's. We are told that his deportment, his gesture, his gait showed resolution, certainty and character, the expression of his face a revolutionary, more or less titanic discontent, such as is noticeable in the faces of pretenders of every kind. Then comes a little cloud of dust indicative of the storm that is brewing. On arriving at Frankfurt Heine inquires of some tradesman where Börne is living. The man knowingly wags his head and replies: "Where Dr Börne is living I don't know, but Mme Wohl lives on the Wallgraben." The relations between this lady and Börne are again referred to at somewhat greater length, and the suggestion as to their nature becomes less vague a few pages later on. Throughout the greater portion of this part the author makes Börne talk volubly on a variety of topics. Heine generally suggests them and gives Börne as much rope as he wants to hang himself with, that is to say, to show himself the uncompromising, narrow-minded Nazarene Heine wishes to portray. Finally, no doubt is left in the reader's mind that, but for the Jewish memories of their early youth, they had little in common, for art, nature, poetry and philosophy were so many books with seven seals to Börne. The two men really lived and moved in different worlds, and unless fortune so far favoured them as to let them live apart, the conflict between them was inevitable.

The second part is only very remotely connected with the first, it is really a chapter of the author's memoirs dealing with the time when the news of the July Revolution arrived in Heligoland. In his correspondence with Campe he showed great anxiety that the work should be published without previous submission to the censor.

To bring the work up to the statutory size was probably the object of the inclusion of these pages. Börne's name is not even mentioned once. Heine calls it a connecting bridge between the first and the third part without which the transition would have been too abrupt. It reminds one much rather of the period of respite elapsing between the first dose of the cat-o'-nine-tails and the second application.

A few paragraphs written nine years later than the rest of that part are particularly interesting as showing the difference between the revolutionary phantasmagoria of Heligoland and the disenchantment Heine experienced when he saw the crude reality.

"Even a few days after my arrival in the capital of the revolution," he writes, "I noticed that things appeared in reality in different colours from those the light effects of my enthusiasm lent them in the distance. The silvery hair which I had seen wave around the shoulders of Lafayette, the hero of two worlds, was changed on closer inspection into a brown wig inadequately covering a narrow skull, and Medor, the dog, whom I visited in the courtyard of the Louvre, where he was lying amidst tricolours and trophies and allowing himself to be fed, was not the real Medor but an ordinary beast arrogating merit not his own as often happens among the French, and like many others he exploited the glory of the July Revolution. He was pampered, promoted, perhaps raised to the highest offices, while the real Medor, a few days after the victory, slunk away modestly like the real people who had fought in the revolution. Poor People! poor dog! It is an old story. From time immemorial the people have ever bled and suffered not for themselves but for others. In 1830 they carried off the victory for that bourgeoisie which is as worthless as the nobility whose place it had taken in the same spirit of selfishness. The people have gained nothing by the victory but regret and greater distress."

Heine was radically cured of the revolutionary fever. Gone was his belief in a millennium to be brought about by revolutionary methods, and gone any hankerings after the society of the German republicans in Paris. Börne, too, had changed, but it was a change that took him still further away from Heine; he seemed to have lost

his old sense of humour, he had become bitter and bilious, and showed himself a more bigoted republican than ever. The greater part of the third book is devoted to a caustic description of the evil-smelling, tobacco-reeking, unwashed republican crowd whose god Börne was, and Börne's talks on political subjects, masterpieces of persiflage as Heine reports them. Throughout the three parts he had given the most ample and convincing reasons for the enmity between himself and Börne; the reader could be perfectly satisfied; what punishment was meted out to Börne had been given most effectively and with an apparent good-humour which impressed the reader with the author's consciousness of his indubitable superiority. There could be nothing more genial than the way he tells the amusing anecdote about Börne who, knowing that the spy of some foreign government was dogging his steps and probably sending off well-paid reports on Börne's doings, suggested he might draw up the reports himself for half the money and ultimately get his living by spying on himself.

Then all of a sudden, without the slightest warning, the tiger shows his claws. In the very next paragraph he pounces upon Börne's perfectly inoffensive friend, "the ambiguous Mme Wohl, of whom it had hitherto not been quite certain whether she was Börne's mistress or only his wife." But there was no doubt now about their relations. Mme Wohl had lately married a Herr Strauss of Frankfurt, and Heine suggests, surely fantastically enough considering Börne's dilapidated physical condition, that the three were carrying on a revolting *ménage à trois*, and that Heine had broken off all relations with Börne because the knowledge of this state of things filled his pure soul with loathing.

That after this ill-natured paroxysm Heine returns as suddenly to his former tone of badinage as if nothing had happened may well surprise us, and renders the supposition probable that the whole passage was interpolated as an afterthought under the stress of some specific irritation against Börne. The discord becomes

all the more marked when a few pages farther on Heine becomes positively courteous to his victim. "He was neither a genius," he says, "nor a demi-god, nor one of the gods of Olympus. He was a man, a citizen of this world, a good writer and a great patriot." Later on he still further elaborates his praise of Börne's patriotism. "Börne," he says, "was perhaps the greatest patriot that ever drew the intensest life and the bitterest death from the breasts of a harsh and unmotherly Germany. In the soul of this man there exulted and bled a touching love of the fatherland, a love which like every kind of love is timorous and likes to hide behind fault-finding, scolding, grumbling and surliness, but in an unguarded hour breaks out all the more vehemently." He pays him an even greater compliment by comparing him to Lessing, one of Heine's gods, on account of his inner worth, his noble will, his passionate patriotism, and his enthusiasm for humanity. After that we are not surprised to find Heine referring to Börne's life, which was so "immaculate" that all his enemies could do was to call him a Jew, or cast doubt on the sincerity of his patriotism.¹

The indignation aroused in Germany by the appearance of the book was paralleled only by the protests called forth by the attack on Platen. The Wohl episode, absurdly enough, damned the whole brilliant work and blinded both critics and the general public to the supreme excellencies with which the work abounds. The suggestion of perfect objectivity, and the appearance of irreproachable fairness in presenting Börne's character and developing his political views, is a masterpiece of literary method, and the idea of letting Börne condemn himself out of his own mouth is as ingenious as it is effectively carried out. No doubt, too, much has been made of the Wohl episode, and a great deal of the fury sweeping through Germany and set down to the account of that indelicacy was in reality stirred up by the courage and consummate skill with which Heine

¹ Elster, *Heines Werke*, vol. vii. p. 122.

had exposed the childish immaturity and impracticability of the type of liberalism in vogue and had castigated its terroristic attitude and narrow-minded intolerance towards those of even slightly different political faith. If Heine has ever shown political sagacity and courage it was surely in this book on Börne.

If the public seemed to see nothing of all this, probably the explanation is the one suggested by Campe when he wrote to Heine soon after the publication.¹

“You no longer understand Germany and the Germans, you know neither their views nor their whims. Take care or the rest of your popularity goes to the devil. Everybody here sees in Börne no longer the writer but the martyr of German liberty, who may some day become a saint in our calendar. Even the former political enemies of Börne have gone over to him. They esteem and respect him as an honest, upright, reliable character. So do I, so does everybody. The book has produced the very opposite effect to what you expected. Can’t you understand the howler you made? There are suicides among men who deliberately leave life;—but are there also literary suicides? That would be something new.”

Gutzkow, who was just publishing a life of Börne, had led the onslaught in a preface bristling with scathing criticism. The few timid voices which were raised in favour of the merits of the book were drowned in the hurricane of resentment and exasperation that overwhelmed the author. It might well have proved his “Russian campaign,” as Campe called it, and no doubt would have proved the final catastrophe in the case of any man of less grit and capacity for living down defeat and disgrace.

Compared with this moral débâcle the pistol duel he had to fight with Herr Strauss, and in which he was slightly wounded, was a matter of no importance.

¹ Hirth, 21st August 1840.

XX

MINOR WORKS

BESIDES this nerve-wracking polemical literature Heine produced little enough of striking originality in this period from 1835 to 1840. He was handicapped, not only by his bitter political and literary vendettas, but also by the distressing state of his health, which became ever more alarming. Attacks of grippe, of jaundice, of torturing headaches, and an uncanny paralysis creeping on relentlessly, slowly deprived him of what physical power he required for the mechanical process of writing, and filled his soul with dread and despair regarding his own future and that of Mathilde. It was about that time, too, that his financial worries reached a climax, and he saw no way of paying his debts but to sell the exclusive right of publishing his collected works for eleven years to Campe, who according to his habit took advantage of the poet's extremity. It is characteristic of the same publisher's methods that Heine, who had sold the first edition of his *Buch der Lieder* to Campe for fifty *louis d'or*, never received another groschen for any subsequent edition of his most famous work. Other schemes to make money by starting German newspapers and reviews to be published in Paris had to be abandoned when it was seen that the hostile attitude of the German Governments precluded the circulation of such publications in Germany, and thus rendered such enterprises not only precarious but hopeless.

Fortunately the arrangements with Campe left Heine at liberty to accept the proposals of other firms that he should write an introduction to a German translation of *Don Quixote* and to a collection of reproductions of

engravings by English artists illustrating Shakespeare's women. These pot-boilers, while not ranking very high among his works, are by no means as soulless as such commercial orders are apt to be, nor do they deserve his own depreciatory estimate: "the worst thing I have written" for the preface to *Don Quixote* and "just good enough" in the case of that to *Shakespeare's Women*. It is true that after the very characteristic opening paragraph there is nothing remarkable about the remainder of the essay on *Don Quixote*, still, while the reader may agree with Wolff's statement that one need not be a Heine to write such a preface, it is equally true that no other writer need have been ashamed of having written it.

The essay on *Shakespeare's Women* is a more interesting production. It is a serious historical and philosophical essay, no doubt mixed occasionally with mere journalism and, on the whole, giving little that is absolutely new, but showing extensive if not always intensive knowledge of the subject of Shakespeare and Shakespeare criticism. That he should speak of Shakespeare with the unrestrained, almost mystic, exuberance of Tieck who had originated this form of Shakespeare worship among the Romantics is only natural, considering Heine's many points of close contact with Romanticism and the fact that the Germans had really got to know Shakespeare under the auspices of the Romantic School. On the whole his remarks are by no means the echo of Tieck, and there is one that might be very profitably read and re-read by a certain class of his biographers. It deals with the genesis of poetic inspiration and the relations between art and life experience (*Erlebnis*). He had been saying that the poet already holds the world within him when he is born, so that when he awakes to the consciousness of himself he understands every part of the external phenomenal world in all its relations, just as the mathematician who is given the tiniest fragment of a circle can immediately infer the size of the circle and the location of its centre.

"But a fragment of the phenomenal world," he continues, "must be offered the poet before that marvellous process of world completion can take place. The perception of a piece of the phenomenal world is done by the senses and is as it were the external event conditioning the internal revelation to which we owe the works of the poet. The greater these works the greater our curiosity to know those external events which first occasioned them. We love to search for the real relations of the poet's life. This curiosity is all the more foolish as, according to what has been stated above, the greatness of these events is in no proportion to the greatness of the creations called forth by them. These events may be very insignificant and lustreless and generally are so just as the lives of the poets are generally insignificant and lustreless. . . . The poets present themselves to the world in the splendour of their works, and, especially when we see them from afar, we are dazzled by their radiance. Oh, let us refrain from examining their lives too closely!"

Among the individual characterizations of Shakespeare's characters the most original are the one of Cleopatra, the "reine entretenue," and that of Jessica with its eloquent though somewhat one-sided insistence on Shylock as a tragic figure and the only gentleman among the *dramatis personæ*.

Nothing more charming has ever been written on Shakespeare's comedies than his introductory observations on the subject in the second part of the essay. That alone would make us forgive him the occasional weak and trite spots of the preface and the frequent bobbing up of tiresome old friends such as the invective against England with which it opens.⁴

In 1837 Heine published the third volume of the *Salon*, which, except for what was to have been the preface, the famous attack on Menzel, which was ruled out by the censor, was absolutely free from anything likely to offend the delicate taste of the German authorities. It contains the *Florentinische Nächte* and *Elementargeister*. The former consists of two very flimsy and probably hastily written stories clearly harking back to the manner of Hoffmann and other romantic writers of short stories. A young man, Maximilian, is telling the stories to a

beautiful woman who is dying of consumption and had been enjoined by the physician not to speak. To enable her to carry out this order Maximilian talks incessantly, with the result one might expect. Various morbid elements belonging rather to the time of the *Traumbilder* make the atmosphere romantically creepy. The young man shows his peculiar taste by falling in love not only with the dying woman but also with marble statues, and the heroine of the second story, whom he also loved, was born in a coffin by a woman only apparently dead. What we can still read are the parts that have nothing whatever to do with what slender story there is. They are the masterly impressionistic account of Paganini's violin-playing which concludes the first story, and the Bellini episode. Mme Jaubert¹ tells us that Heine frequently met at the castle of Princess Belgiojoso the Italian composer Bellini, then at the height of his fame, a good-natured child, fair-haired, with a pink and white complexion, very sensitive to mockery, speaking abominable French, and tortured by a superstitious dread of the evil eye. That and the favour he enjoyed with the ladies was enough for Heine, who made his life miserable by acting the *gettatore* and accompanying his evil glances by Mephistophelian gestures. This Bellini, whom in all conscience he had already sufficiently tortured in actual life, he drags into the first tale as a laughing-stock. It must be admitted that the portrait he presents of the very lovable composer is very good-natured, until he begins to speak of Bellini's French.

"Although Bellini," he says, "had spent several years in France, he spoke the language perhaps even worse than it is spoken in England. We can hardly say that his French was bad; bad is really too good. We must say: frightful, incestuous, cataclysmic. If you happened to find yourself in society with him, and he broke the poor French words on the wheel like the public hangman and shelled out his colossal absurdities, you thought the world might crash to pieces at any moment. The silence of death pervaded the room, terror overspread the faces, women

¹ C. Jaubert, *Souvenirs*, pp. 288 ff.

did not know whether to faint or to run away, men looked in consternation at their trousers to see if they still had them on. The most awful part was that this terror at the same time excited irresistible convulsive laughter."

The second story contains nothing of interest.

The *Elementargeister* gives little more than what Heine found in contemporary standard works on the subject of elves, dwarfs, gnomes and watersprites. Fortunately, however, when Heine has told us that the Christian Church converted the ancient pagan deities, whose existence it found it good policy not to deny, into devils whose mischievous power was confined to certain limited areas like the Brocken and the Venus Mountain, he drops the more or less scientific tone and becomes the poet again. His poem, *Tannhäuser*, the subject of which was suggested by his remarks on the pagan deities under the Christian regime, is Heine's version of an old *Tannhäuserlied* of the Middle Ages. It is the most interesting portion of the *Elementargeister* and is worth all the rest of the book, a curious mixture of the naïveté of the Volkslied with thoroughly modern and Heinesque elements. The first part deals with the farewell of the satiated and repentent Tannhäuser from Venus and the visit to the Pope who refuses him absolution. The last part is an amusing modern version of Tannhäuser's return *via* Frankfurt, Dresden, Weimar, Celle, Potsdam, Göttingen and Hamburg, each of which is the recipient of a witty epigrammatic stanza. The poem is particularly interesting, as the author gives us the folk-version as well, and with it the opportunity of seeing the use Heine makes of the folk-song and how he improves upon it. While he discards the jarring roughness of the metre and the assonance for which he substitutes the rhyme, he leaves enough, or perhaps deliberately introduces enough, irregularities to make his verse the echo of the form of the original. What constitutes the main difference with regard to the contents is the cultural atmosphere and the motivation. In the folk-song the motive for Tannhäuser's departure

from the Venus Mountain is theological, he dreads the tortures of hell-fire on account of his association with a demon ("eine Teufelinne"). This is all he confesses to the Pope, who tells him that if a dry stick he shows him breaks out into leaf again, his sin will be forgiven. When the miracle takes place Tannhäuser has already returned to Venus. Obviously this does not appeal to our mentality, nor did it satisfy Heine. In his version the hero through sheer satiety takes leave of Venus, because he finds it impossible to bear unmixed happiness any longer :

Frau Venus, meine schöne Frau,
 Von süßem Wein und Küssen
 Ist meine Seele worden krank ;
 Ich schmachte nach Bitternissen.

Wir haben zu viel gescherzt und gelacht,
 Ich sehne mich nach Thränen,
 Und statt der Rosen möcht ich mein Haupt
 Mit spitzigen Dornen krönen.

This is perfectly human.

Tannhäuser's religious scruples do not make themselves felt until he has escaped from the Venus Mountain. In his confession to the Pope it is clearly not the sin he has committed, but the sin he will inevitably commit again, for the remembrance of the physical charms of Venus constitutes a chain as strong as her presence ever did :

Ich hab' mich gerettet aus dem Berg,
 Doch stets verfolgen die Blicke
 Der schönen Frau mich überall,
 Sie winken : komm zurücke !

Ein armes Gespenst bin ich am Tag,
 Des Nachts mein Leben erwachet,
 Dann träum' ich von meiner schönen Frau,
 Sie sitzt bei mir und lachet.

Ich liebe sie mit Allgewalt,
 Mit wild entzügelten Flammen—
 Ist das der Hölle Feuer schon,
 Und wird mich Gott verdammen ?

O, heil'ger Vater, Papst Urban,
 Du kannst ja binden und lösen !
 Errette mich von der Höllenqual
 Und von der Macht des Bösen.

The Pope is as human as Tannhäuser, and his answer is quite in keeping with Tannhäuser's view of the danger:

Tannhäuser, unglücksel' ger Mann,
 Der Zauber ist nicht zu brechen.

Der Teufel den man Venus nennt,
 Er ist der schlimmste von allen,
 Erretten kann ich dich nimmer mehr
 Aus seinen schönen Krallen.

Tannhäuser thereupon hastens back to the Venus Mountain. There is not a word of despair or regret.

The legend made a strong personal appeal to the poet which rendered the modernization easy and natural. He, too, had felt the intoxication of the beauty, but also the weight and the irksomeness of the fetters, of his Venus-Mathilde, fetters which he had found himself unable to shake off. Some of the stanzas in his recital to the Pope of the attraction of Venus express in verse almost word for word what he had often said in his letters and conversations about Mathilde, *e.g.* :

Sie lacht so gesund, so glücklich, so toll,
 Und mit so weissen Zähnen !
 Wenn ich an dieses Lachen denk',
 So weine ich plötzliche Thränen.

Ich liebe sie mit Allgewalt,
 Nichts kann die Liebe hemmen !
 Das ist wie ein wilder Wasserfall ;
 Du kannst seine Fluten nicht dämmen.

When Bechstein¹ asked Heine in 1835 if he had no intention of returning to Germany, he smiled sadly and

¹ H. H. Houben, *Gespräche mit Heine*, p. 240.

replied: "Hardly. I am the Tannhäuser who is a prisoner in the Venus Mountain; the sorceress will not set me free again."

In the autumn of 1840 Campe published the fourth and last volume of the *Salon* containing the novelistic fragment of the *Rabbi von Bacharach*, a few poems, and *Über die französische Bühne*.

Heine began the work on the *Rabbi* as early as 1824. As the story was laid in the Middle Ages he did everything to prepare himself for the task. He studied Jewish history, medieval chronicles, laid under contribution the expert knowledge of friends like Zunz, in short, neglected nothing to acquire the most intimate familiarity with the Jewish life of the time. He calls his preliminary studies "stupendous." It was to be an "immortal" creation of great size, and the historians of future centuries were to regard it as a source of accurate information. He tells us that he bore the project in his heart with unspeakable love, that he was convinced that he alone could write this book, and that the writing would be an act not only useful but pleasing to God. After this we are prepared for a disappointment.

The primary impetus and inspiration date back to the poet's stay in Berlin and his membership in the *Verein für Kultur and Wissenschaft der Juden*, with its idealistic scheme of cultural assimilation. The writing did not progress as fast as he expected or as he loved to represent to his friends. Still for some time it continues to be in his eyes the one thing worth writing. Even his baptism in 1825 does not shelve it; it rather supplies him with an additional personal interest, but before long it becomes evident that the monumental work is likely to assume less imposing proportions, for he speaks of publishing it, which probably means as a fragment, as a part of the second or third volume of his *Reisebilder*. Ultimately he does not do this, and, although there are frequent references to his *Rabbi* in his subsequent correspondence, there is no doubt that after 1826 or 1827 the *Rabbi* found a resting-place in some drawer

among the poet's unpublished manuscripts. When finally it was published in 1840 it consisted of three chapters only, amounting to a mere exposition or introduction. The remainder of the complete work was burnt, so Heine says, in 1833, when his mother's house in Hamburg was destroyed by fire.

Biographers have shown considerable hesitation in accepting this statement, in spite of the confirmatory assurance of Charlotte, Heine's sister, that the novel had really been completed. The memory of the poet's relatives has so often been shown to be deplorably treacherous, not only with regard to what it fails to remember, but also with regard to what it does recall. All that we really know points to the likelihood of not more than two-thirds having ever been written, which is probably a very liberal estimate. Two of the three chapters published we owe to the fact that the poet had a copy of them in his possession. Their style is obviously that of Heine's youth with its romantic imagery and even the grammatical mistakes of that time, while the third chapter as obviously belongs to the time of his maturity and has every appearance of having been dashed off shortly before publication to make a volume large enough to satisfy the censor. It is a melancholy thought that what Heine in the heyday of his youthful ambition had expected to be the most astonishing creation of his genius and a "gottgefälliges Werk" had now become a mere filler to be chucked into the volume—"hineingeschmissen" Heine calls it—to make a few talers and, worse still, to be got rid of as a downright nuisance. In a letter to Campe he refers to his pious undertaking as "das verdammte Buch," on account of which he had to stay a week longer in the heat of Paris.

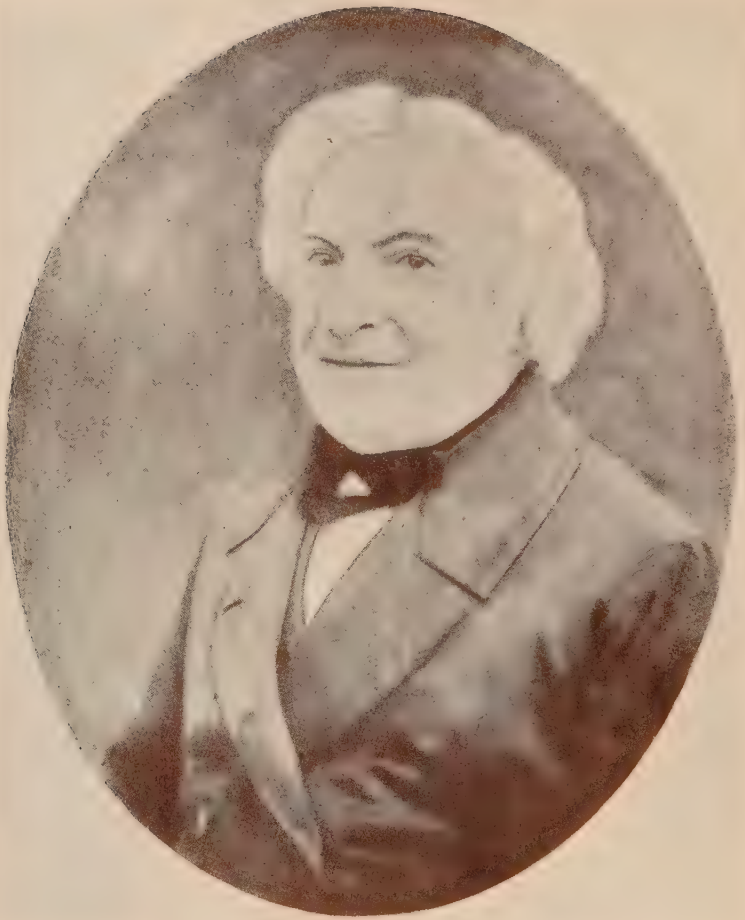
What we have of the story is as follows. During the celebration of the Passover in the house of Rabbi Abraham of Bacharach two strangers succeed in placing the dead body of a child under the table. This was in the Middle Ages an easy way of starting a massacre of

the Jews, as it was generally believed that the body of a Christian child was an essential requisite in the celebration of the Passover. The Rabbi is the only one to notice the body, and realizing the danger manages to escape with his wife, the beautiful Sarah, without giving his flock any warning. He explains his desertion to his wife by saying that the others were in no danger, as the enemies of the Jews were out for his blood and would now be satisfied with the wealth he left behind him. Nevertheless on reaching the Frankfurt ghetto he goes straight to the synagogue to recite the lamentations for the dead Jews of Bacharach. In this Frankfurt ghetto he meets a young Spanish Jew, Isaac Abarbanel, who has become a Christian, at least outwardly, and who represents Hellenism with its joy of life in contrast to the Nazarenism with its gloom as represented by the Rabbi. "The conclusion of this chapter and the following chapters have been lost through the fault of the author." This is the author's concluding remark.

How the story was to be carried on from this point we do not know. The only thing Heine reveals is to be found in a letter to Campe, according to which it was just as well that the manuscript was destroyed, "as the heretical views expressed in what followed would have shocked Christians as well as Jews." Rabbi Abraham, who it appears is laden with his father's curse for marrying without his consent, and who besides holds an unenviable record in the matter of the cowardly and selfish desertion of his congregation, is at first the main bearer of the action, but might subsequently have given way to the more interesting and beyond question more sympathetic Isaac Abarbanel. This was all the more likely to happen as Abarbanel is evidently Heine himself with all his wit, his satire, his love of beautiful women and of good living, his hatred of Nazarenism and of all positive religions, and his readiness to disparage Jews and Judaism. The poor-spirited Rabbi was a sufficiently uninspiring hero in the first chapter with its strong pro-Jewish bias and its polemical undercurrent; he could at

best serve as a foil in the markedly ironical third chapter and, unless Heine made another volte-face in what was to follow, the *Rabbi* was in danger of being completely wiped out. That the whole idea of the novel underwent a radical change between the first chapters and the third will appear natural enough when we remember that the former were written in 1824 and the third in all probability in 1840. Many years before the latter date Heine's attitude towards religion and the Jews had changed fundamentally. As Feuchtwanger suggests, the fragment in its totality produces the effect of a persiflage of the original plan and seems to show the poet now, in 1840, towering high above the ideals of his Berlin period. All unity of idea has thus disappeared, which renders it all the more futile to speculate on the further development of what story there was going to be.

The fate of Heine's other novelistic attempts makes it very doubtful whether any connected story would or even could have followed. *Le Grand, Bäder von Lucca*, *Schnabelewopski*, and *Florentinische Nächte* seem to bear out Heine's own statement that he has little talent for narration. Everything points to the probability that the *Rabbi*, which after an objective opening became unmistakably subjective as early as the third chapter, would soon have approached the type of the *Reisebilder* with their pleasantly meandering composition, entertaining and stimulating, but leading nowhere in particular. Heine, who could exhaust all the possibilities of an individual mood, a situation, an incident, could create life-like and convincing characters like Gumpelino, Hirsch Hyacinth and Börne, fails hopelessly whenever he attempts to string moods, situations, incidents together in artistic sequence, into a whole having a beginning, a middle, and an end. Not that there are wanting in the *Rabbi* features worthy to rank with the very best Heine has ever written, but even the description of the Passover celebration in Bacharach, of the journey on the Rhine in the spring night, of the Juden-



JULIUS CAMPE

Daguerrotype

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gasse in Frankfurt, and the few well-drawn characters especially among the figures of secondary importance like Nasenstern and Schnapper Elle cannot redeem the bewildering weakness of motivation and the general chaos in the conception and execution of the fragment.

The publication of the *Rabbi* passed unnoticed. Heine himself expected so little glory from it that in a letter to Lewald announcing the publication of the fourth volume of the *Salon* he mentions *Über die französische Bühne*, the *Poems*, but does not say a word about the *Rabbi*. There is a literary as well as an ethical tragedy in the contrast between the letter to Moser in 1824, in which he tells of the "unspeakable love with which he carries the project in his heart," and the cold and contemptuous indifference manifested in the letter to Lewald in 1840. It marks the shattering of another ideal.

XXI

EXIT THE JOURNALIST

THE letters *Über die französische Bühne* make up the second part of this volume of the *Salon*. They appeared originally in 1837 in Lewald's *Allgemeine Theaterrevue*, and as they were addressed to his old friend Lewald personally the author felt he had greater liberty in his method of treating the subject, hence the tone is far from formal. Often his letters begin with news about the weather or his state of health, an amusing or pathetic anecdote, and he thinks nothing of breaking in upon an examination of French and German methods of elocution by pleading that he is being interrupted by a diabolical noise outside his window caused by fighting school boys, or that there was a row on his landing which sounded as if one of Klopstock's odes had tumbled down-stairs. The mere gossip which is scattered throughout the letters, even the amusingly told story of the red book of Veron, the Director of the Opera, is not out of place in such personal letters and, as always with Heine, serves to emphasize the personality of the writer or artist under discussion. There are few references to politics, one showing that the author's enthusiasm for the July Revolution has cooled down to freezing-point, and that the worshipper of Napoleon now sees more of the butchery and the tears of mothers than of the glory in the Emperor's reign. This political matter in letters on the drama and the opera is not the gratuitous *hors-d'œuvre* it is in other works, but is generally explanatory of some literary or musical phenomenon, and organically connected with the main subject.

The letters are an object-lesson to those who are so ready to represent Heine, the *Franzosenfreund*, as a

person who has divested himself of all his *Deutschtum*, as if such a thing were possible, and who proclaims the superiority of things French over things German. Heine's German background is indubitable in these letters, and he is the first to admit it. The praise and adulation he had received in France have not robbed him of a particle of his independence as a critic. There is no attempt to flatter the French, indeed his opinion is often so outspoken that we may well attribute to Heine's criticism of Victor Hugo, for instance, the latter's complete silence regarding the former in his correspondence.

How German he has remained is shown very strikingly in a letter on French comedy in which he finds the relations between man and wife and a *tertium quid*, ending generally in adultery, to be the favourite theme. As married women enjoy greater liberty in France than in Germany, and naturally take advantage of it, this type of French comedy merely reflects social conditions with which everybody is familiar. Therefore it shocks nobody in France.¹ The cleverness of these plays is no doubt fascinating, he says, when one sees them in Germany; but if one happens to be in France, where these things occur in everyday life, and one has a German heart in one's breast, the pleasure in even the best French comedies vanishes.

"I have long ceased," he says, "to laugh at the silliness of the actor Arnal when he plays the cuckold—it is all very nice and entertaining and the people laugh! But when I consider where such comedies end in real life, in the gutters of prostitution, in the hospitals of St Lazare, on the tables of the dissecting-room, where the medical student may watch the instructive carving-up of the companion of his amours, then laughter is choked within my throat, and were I not afraid to make a fool of myself in the presence of the most cultured public in the world I should not retain my tears." "Do you understand, my dear friend," he adds, "that this is just the secret curse of exile that we never feel quite at home in the atmosphere of a strange land, that with our traditional native way of thinking and feeling we stand alone

¹ Elster, *Heines Werke*, vol. iv. p. 502.

among the people which thinks and feels differently, that we are constantly hurt by moral or rather immoral phenomena to which the native has long become reconciled, to which habit has made him callous, just as the scenery of their country has ceased to impress them. Ah! the spiritual climate proves as inhospitable as the physical."

Heine sets about his task with an extraordinarily complete equipment, his acquaintance with three literatures and three peoples enables him to indulge in comparative studies which are often very striking, and always stimulating and interesting. In whatever he investigates he never omits to establish a close organic connection with the social or political condition of the people. Thus he connects the fact that the heroines of German tragedies are generally unmarried women with the comparative freedom girls enjoy in Germanic countries, and their subsequent state of dependence when they are married. In France, on the other hand, a woman's freedom of movement does not begin until she is married, hence the heroines of French tragedies are generally married women. In the same way, after showing that the chief merit of German tragedy lies in its poetry rather than in its action or the portrayal of passion, as is the case with the tragedy of the more active and passionate French people, he continues :

"The passion shown in the French tragedy, that incessant storm of the feelings, that continual thunder and lightning, that eternal upheaval of the emotions suits the needs of the French public as much as it suits the needs of the German public when the author first slowly motivates the mad explosion of passion followed by calmer scenes to let the German mind recover gently, giving them time for reflection and speculation, so that their feelings may be stirred pleasantly and without undue haste. In the German orchestra stalls are seated peaceable citizens or state functionaries who would like to digest their sauerkraut quietly, and in the boxes sit the blue-eyed daughters of the upper classes, who have brought their knitting or some needle-work to the theatre, and they want to go into gentle raptures, without dropping a stitch. And all these spectators possess that German virtue which is either born with us or put into us by training,

patience. The Germans go to the theatre mainly to see the actors. A Frenchman goes to the theatre to see the piece and receive emotions, and he will forget the actors, and little is said about them. A Frenchman is driven to the theatre by his restlessness, and rest is the last thing he looks for there. . . . The principal duty of a French dramatist is therefore not to allow the audience to regain their composure, but to let one emotion follow another, so that love, hatred, jealousy, ambition, pride, all passionate feelings that rage and tear through the real life of the French, should break out into even wilder ravings on the stage."

There are very sane appreciations of Corneille, Racine, and especially Dumas and Victor Hugo. He places Dumas above Victor Hugo as a dramatist, but calls the latter the greatest poet of France, though he cannot resist the temptation of adding that even in Germany he would be placed in the first class of poets, for "he has imagination and feeling and a want of tact which is never found among the French, but only among us Germans. He is lacking in harmony and is overladen with excrescences. He has none of the moderation we admire in the classical writers. His muse, in spite of its splendour, is afflicted with a certain German clumsiness. We might say of his muse what is said of fair English women: she has two left hands." No wonder the most sensitive and unforgiving of French poets consigned this rebel to all the oblivion he could command.

It is interesting to note how lightly Heine touches on the struggle between romanticism and classicism which was raging in French literature at the time, so lightly indeed that one is tempted to conclude that, in spite of his knowledge and of his marvellous intuition, Heine, so far from grasping the full significance of the conflict, really saw in French romanticism nothing more than a purely transitory, naturalistic fad.

In the ninth and the tenth letters Heine wanders into the realm of music. We almost tremble at the thought and are amazed at his courage, because we know that if there is anything of which Heine himself would frankly confess his ignorance, it is music. Of his early musical

training we only know that as a boy he took violin lessons or was supposed to, that one day his mother heard him play astonishingly well, but on entering the room found it was the teacher playing while the pupil was lying on the sofa listening. There is hardly any reference to music in his earlier works except the singing of the romantic nightingale. Heine's fondness for Le Grand's drumming does not give us the impression that his sense of music was specially refined. He does not seem to have felt any craving for music. According to Mme Jaubert he never was an assiduous attendant at concerts or operatic performances. Hiller¹ assures us that Heine never asked him to play to him, although Hiller was a splendid musician, and, according to the same authority, Heine, when asked if he was really interested in music, replied: "Only in its representatives."

Heine disarms criticism at the outset by assuring the reader that he will give him no theory, that to him the essence of music is revelation, of which no account can be given, and that true musical criticism is an empirical science. This he illustrates amusingly by telling the story of two commercial travellers who were discussing the relative merits of Rossini and Meyerbeer. As soon as one of them awarded the palm to Rossini, the other opposed him, not with words, but by humming particularly fine tunes from *Robert le Diable*, to which the other replied in a most telling way by singing snatches from the *Barbiere*, and so they went on; instead of a noisy exchange of meaningless phrases they gave the listener delightful music, and in the end he had to admit that music should not be discussed at all unless it be in this realistic manner.

There follow excellent characterizations of Rossini and Meyerbeer and their music, of the melody of the one and the harmony of the other, of their social and political milieu, into which they fit so exactly, everything brought into relief by cleverly inserted anecdotes

¹ Houben, *Gespräche mit Heine*, p. 207.

illustrating mannerisms and idiosyncrasies of the composers.

In spite of the absence of all scientific phraseology Heine's account is by no means mere ephemeral journalism. It is interesting not only because it is the only occasion on which Heine discusses music at some length and does so with a charming ease and an apparent familiarity with his subject we never expected, but also because, throwing away the crutches of scientific terminology, he succeeded in giving his readers, in easily intelligible language, convincing impressionist sketches of contemporary musicians and their music. That he gives us something more than any ordinary historian of music would give us, history seen through a temperament, music plus Heine, no student of Heine will complain.

In 1840 Heine returned for a few years to the task he had set himself on arriving in France, that of interpreter of France and Germany. At irregular intervals he wrote for the *Allgemeine Zeitung* a series of articles on "politics, art and the life of the people," which were republished in book form in 1854.

The years between 1840 and 1843 were a particularly interesting period of French history. It was the time of the struggles between King and Parliament, of the relentless encroachments of the latter and the steady waning of the former's power, the time of the rivalry between the fiery Thiers, the leader of the war party, and the slow and deliberate Guizot. The latter, though personally very honest, became by force of circumstances the ally of a corrupt bourgeoisie, the protagonist of bourgeois conservatism and of uncompromising resistance to the claims of the proletariat and the further lowering of the franchise. France was on the brink of war with Germany, war with England, war arising out of the Eastern Question, which was as pregnant with mischief then as it has ever been. Besides, the strife and the wrangling of the various hopelessly irreconcilable parties, Republicans, Bonapartists,

Legitimists, was a source of continual anxiety to the unhappy ruler of France, and made a smooth running of the government machine impossible.

Heine was now infinitely better qualified to interpret the political situation to German readers than he had been eight years before, when he wrote the *Französische Zustände*. He realized what a novice he was then, and he was determined this time to produce something which would rank both as literature and as history. Before republishing the articles in book form under the title *Lutetia*, he took infinite pains to render the form as faultless as possible, so that the whole might be regarded as "an anthology of good prose." It will be readily admitted that in point of clearness, incisiveness and euphony the prose of *Lutetia* is indeed a model. Whether it is not only literature but also objective history is, of course, a totally different question. Probably most readers of Heine would in any case be disappointed if he gave them the objective history any pedantic plodder could give, instead of a history every page of which is a reflection of the personality of the author and owes a great deal to his artistic touches. In this particular case the artist's hand is shown in the selection and grouping of the actual happenings and in the portrayal of the personality of the actors in the political drama. That more than one of his most telling anecdotes is apocryphal may also be taken for granted.

Those who remember the Heine of the *Französische Zustände* will be struck by a change in his political attitude for which his former republican friends dubbed him turncoat and traitor. His unalloyed enthusiasm for France, Paris and the French has given way to a cooler and more critical judgment, all waving of the red flag has ceased, revolutions and republicanism are held at arm's length, and he frankly recognizes the *raison d'être* of his old enemies, the aristocracy and the clergy. The French are no longer the most adorable and the most civilized people under the sun, they are

frivolous and egotistical, they will allow anyone who succeeds in tickling their national vanity to put them into any kind of uniform; he is shocked by their political corruption and their national sport of place-hunting in the government service. They are quite unfit to establish the republic which was the dream of his younger years, for they lack all republican virtues, they have neither simplicity, self-reliance nor repose, they are by nature Bonapartist. They love war for its own sake, even in times of peace their life is nothing but strife and noise; old and young delight in drum-beating, powder-smoke and noisy effects of all kinds. His former idol, Napoleon, has from a saviour of mankind become a mere national hero.¹ Saint Simon and his gospel have ceased to interest him.

For Louis Philippe, on the other hand, whom in the *Französische Zustände* he alternately ridiculed and loftily patronized, he seems to have conceived a sincere respect. He calls him a great king, the guardian of peace, the wizard whose patient prudence subdues the storms which his death will set loose. Once before Heine had flattered a king, Ludwig of Bavaria, on that occasion from not altogether commendable motives, but what he says in favour of Louis Philippe comes from his very heart and is the expression of his deepest conviction. Heine had not only reached years of discretion, but his physical condition made him yearn for peace and quiet and made him particularly dread all violent changes. "I belong already to those men," he wrote to his mother, "who are satisfied to have things remain as they are." He was afraid of the demons he had helped to evoke by his anti-monarchical and anti-clerical propaganda, demons which refused to be exorcised. He heard the rumbling of the proletarian rising, which was sweeping away not only peace and quiet but all the beautiful things of life as well. The natural rampart against this danger, the French bourgeoisie, was too

¹ See the very sane appreciation he gives of Napoleon in vol. vi. of the Elster edition, pp. 177 ff.

corrupt to avert the catastrophe which was inevitable, and a respite could only come from the king, Guizot and Rothschild and what the latter stood for. "Every taler fights bravely against republicanism," he writes, "every ducat is an Achilles."

That it was not without a struggle that he cast in his lot with kings, conservative prime ministers and financiers, that only a conviction of absolute necessity could make him pen this recantation, is shown by some very interesting and significant passages in the preface to the French edition of *Lutetia* published in 1855, a year before his death. He tells his French readers that his heart is filled with horror and terror at the thought of a time when these gloomy communistic iconoclasts will seize the reins of power, when their horny hands will mercilessly shatter the marble statues of beauty so dear to his heart. They will smash all the fantastic baubles and nicknacks the poet loves, they will destroy his laurel groves and will plant potatoes in their place, there will be no lilies which neither toil nor spin, no roses, nor those useless songsters, the nightingales, and alas! his Book of Songs will be used by the grocer to make paper bags into which he will put the coffee or the snuff for the old women of the future.

"And yet," he continues, "I confess that this same communism, so hostile to all my interests and my tastes, casts an irresistible spell over my soul. Two voices in my heart speak in its favour, two voices which refuse to be silenced, which are perhaps after all only diabolical suggestions but by which I am possessed to such an extent that no power can exorcise them. One is the voice of logic. 'The devil is a logician,' says Dante. A terrible syllogism has bewitched me, and if I cannot refute this premise 'that all men have the right to eat' I am compelled to submit to all its consequences. When I think of it I am in danger of losing my reason. I see all the demons of truth dance in triumph around me, and at last a generous despair invades my heart and I exclaim: 'This old society was judged and condemned long ago. Let justice be done! Let this old world be shattered where innocence has perished, where selfishness has prospered and where man is exploited by man! Let these whited sepulchres be

utterly destroyed, the lairs of lying and iniquity ! And blessed be the grocer who will some day make paper bags of my poetry to fill them with coffee and snuff for the dear old women who in this world of injustice have perhaps had to do without such pleasures—*fiat justitia, pereat mundus !* ”

The second voice is that of his undying hatred of the teutomaniac nationalist party of Germany, whose patriotism manifests itself mainly by an idiotic aversion to everything foreign, a party he has fought all his life. Now that the sword is falling from his dying hand he derives comfort from the thought that this party will be the first to be encountered by communism and to be crushed like a toad. His hatred of the partisans of this nationalism almost makes him love communism.

Many hard things have been said by Frenchmen about the author of *Lutetia*. We are not surprised, for the compliments he used to shower upon the French have now turned to depreciation and fault-finding. In the opening paragraph of the preface to the French edition there is an attempt to appease the wrath his frankness might arouse in his French readers. We quote the charming lines in the original as an example of Heine writing French. Speaking of the unfavourable impression created in France by the German original, he says :

“ Ce fut donc pour moi un besoin moral de faire paraître au plus tôt une version française de mon ouvrage et de donner ainsi à ma très belle et très bonne amie Lutèce le moyen de juger par elle-même comment je l’ai traitée dans le livre auquel j’ai donné son nom. Quand même quelque part, à mon insu, j’aurais pu encourir son mécontentement par une locution un peu rude ou par une remarque malencontreuse, elle ne doit pas m’accuser d’un manque de sympathie mais seulement d’un manque de culture et de tact. Ma belle Lutèce, n’oublie pas ma nationalité : bien que je sois un des mieux léchés d’entre mes compatriotes, je ne saurais pourtant renier ma nature ; c’est ainsi que les caresses de mes pattes tudesques ont pu te blesser parfois, et je t’ai peut-être lancé plus d’un pavé sur la tête, dans la seule intention de te défendre contre les mouches ! Il y a à considérer en outre qu’en

ce moment où je suis extraordinairement malade, je n'ai pu vouer ni de grands soins ni une grande sérénité d'esprit à peigner ma phrase ; pour dire la vérité, la version allemande de mon livre est bien moins ébouriffée et inculte que la version française. Dans celle-là le style a partout adouci les aspérités du fond. Il est pénible, très pénible, de se voir forcé d'aller dans une mise si peu convenable présenter ses hommages à une élégante déesse aux bords de la Seine, tandis qu'on a chez soi, dans sa commode allemande, les plus beaux habits et plus d'un gilet magnifiquement brodé."

With *Lutetia* the journalist made his final bow to the public.

XXII

THE REBIRTH OF THE POET

THE ten years between 1831 and 1841 were, as has been hinted already, barren of poetic results, if we may take poetry in the narrower meaning as synonymous with verse. Heine was thirty-four when he began to serve his self-inflicted sentence of exile, and had therefore passed the age which is with most men the most fertile in emotional experience. He had entered on the more reflective phase of his development. In spite of his elation and the highly lyrical mood at the time of his arrival in Paris, from which no doubt great things were expected, his muse was practically idle for a great number of years, though Campe continued to publish at intervals during this period collections of Heine's verse which, however, owed their origin mainly to Germany and German inspiration, and very little to the new milieu of Paris or France. The complaint that this preoccupation with reflective, that is to say journalistic and critical work, impeded his poetic productivity is only partly justifiable. The fact is rather that the reflective work was rendered possible, or at all events favoured by the absence of the poetic inspiration.

There was still another and no less important reason for the silence of the lyric poet : he seems for the time being to have said all he had to say in verse on the themes of the *Buch der Lieder*, where it will be remembered he had already repeated himself over and over again. It was apparent that "die alten Liebeser" he derided so effectively and with such charming frankness in the *Heimkehr* had become decidedly stale, and that both Amalie and Therese had lost their power to move him. So a third and last systematic attempt to fan

into flame the embers of his passionate memories, which he made in 1831, was not likely to do much more than repeat what he had said already. In that year he had published as part of the second edition of the second volume of the *Reisebilder* a collection of verse he called *Neuer Frühling*. Most of the pieces had been written in Germany, one, *Gekommen ist der Mai* (No. 5), as early as 1822. The cycle of forty-four songs was written, or at least compiled, for the composer Methfessel, who wished to set them to music. Among them are some of Heine's most admirable poems: the inimitable *Leise zieht durch mein Gemüt*, with its uniformly impure and yet perfectly musical rhymes; *Es war ein alter König*, a tragedy in three stanzas written with all the simplicity of the language of the Volkslied, rendered more impressive by hardly perceptible touches of the hand of an artist; *Durch den Wald im Mondenscheine*; *Wie des Mondes Abbild zittert*, and perhaps a dozen more of real merit; the rest treat the same moods and situations as in the *Buch der Lieder*, and in pretty much the same language. There is something so faded and washed-out, so tired and blasé, about the majority of the poems of this cycle that, while we may still admit the supreme artistry of the technique, we remain unconvinced as to the genuineness of the feelings, even as mere reminiscences. Nor does the poet help us by the liberal use he makes of such well-worn stereotyped ingredients as the nightingale, which is called upon to sing in no fewer than fifteen out of the forty-four poems, or by such whimsical and chilling reflections as those of No. 20:—

Die Rose duftet—doch ob sie empfindet
 Das was sie duftet, ob die Nachtigall
 Selbst fühlt, was sich durch unsre Seele windet,
 Bei ihres Liedes süßem Wiederhall;
 Ich weiss es nicht. Doch macht uns gar verdriesslich
 Die Wahrheit oft! Und Ros' und Nachtigall,
 Erlögen sie auch das Gefühl, erspriesslich
 Wär' solche Lüge, wie in manchem Fall.

These stanzas are sandwiched between two pretty love

poems! Besides, one wonders to what kind of music even the ingenious Methfessel could be expected to set such words.

The collection is arranged, as were the other cycles, to give us the whole story of the poet's passion, how a new love enters the empty and battered heart in spring-time, and how after a short-lived happiness the lover again becomes a prey to despair. This time there is no suggestion of the faithlessness of the beloved, nor does the poet die of a broken heart, nor by his own hand, it is the love itself that dies. That it would die like its predecessors the poet foresees at an early stage:—

Ach! ich weiss wie sich verändern
Diese allzuholden Träume,
Wie mit kalten Schneegewändern
Sich umhüllen Herz und Bäume:

Wie wir selber dann erkühlen
Und uns fliehen und vergessen,
Wir, die jetzt so herzlich fühlen,
Herz an Herz so zärtlich pressen.

A blasé pessimism even more pathetic than the love pain of the *Junge Leiden* has taken the place of the passionate optimism of the earlier cycles, and finally culminates in the lines:—

Die holden Wünsche blühen
Und welken wieder ab,
Und blühen und welken wieder—
So geht es bis an's Grab.

In the first volume of the *Salon*, which appeared in 1834, Heine published the poems *An Verschiedene* and most of the *Schöpfungslieder*, the latter perfectly worthless and even meaningless, except the last. The poems *An Verschiedene* are addressed to various women of easy virtue, nymphs of the Passage des Panoramas, who had been the object of the poet's ephemeral passion.

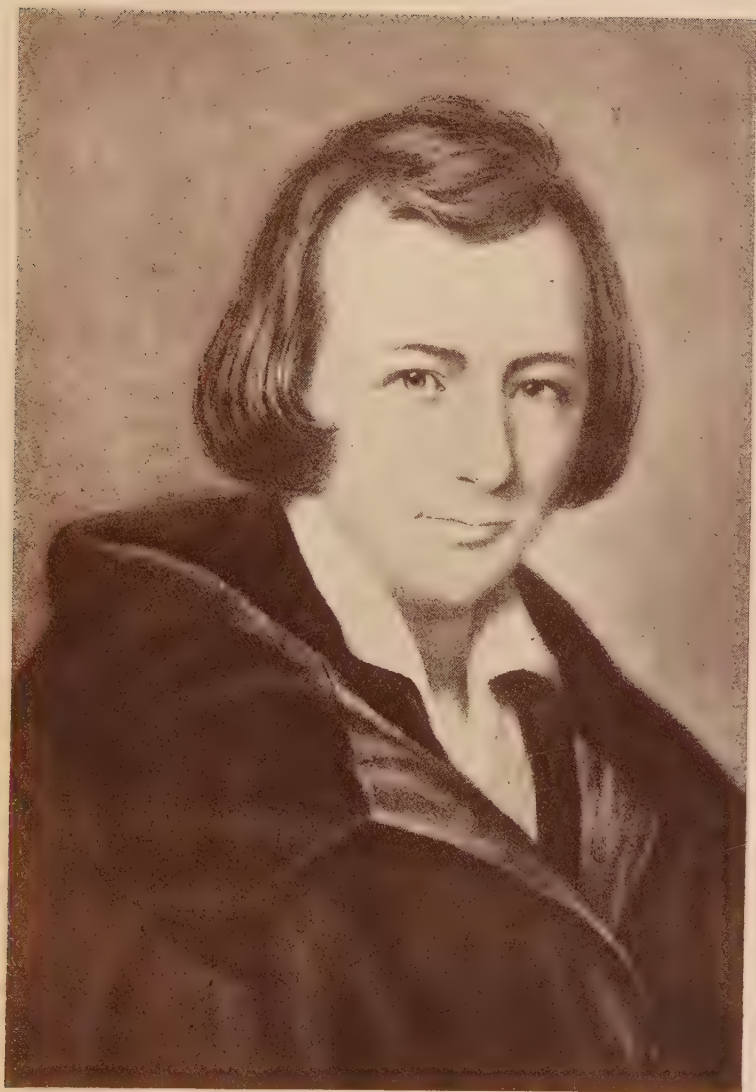
The verses addressed to Seraphine, however, do not come under that head, as they are entirely free from the cruder forms of sensualism and go back very obviously to the time of the *Nordseebilder*, at least the

inspiration does. The scenery and the emotional back-ground are what we find in the *Buch der Lieder*, and among the fifteen songs we have the superb *Es ragt in's Meer der Runenstein*, and that charming reminiscence of Heine's early manner, *Wand' ich in dem Wald des Abends*, besides a number of others that would not have been out of place in the *Buch der Lieder*. With the exception of the Saint Simonistic *Auf diesem Felsen bauen wir* there is not a word suggesting France or Paris, and it is highly improbable that any of the others were written in Paris.

The poems addressed to Angélique, Hortense and so on, are in a totally different category, as the women all belong to the demi-monde, they are mere *chair à plaisir*, and beyond their physical charms have nothing to inspire any interest. Diane is a giantess who would have made her fortune at a fair; Yolante and Marie get drunk on champagne; and Clarisse is so stupid that Heine prays that God may enlighten her brain. The poems created a great scandal, and are even nowadays quoted by critics as awful signs of the shocking depravity of both the man and the poet. It must be admitted that Gutzkow was not far wrong when he said in a warning letter to Heine¹ that such poems could only be read and enjoyed by a merry company sitting about in their shirt-sleeves and surrounded by empty bottles. Heine's reply² to Gutzkow, in which he insists on "the autonomy of art as against the moral needs of some married bourgeois or other in some corner of Germany," misses the point entirely, as the offending poems, those addressed to Diane and Yolante, are not art at all, and merely express in verse what might just as well and in just as interesting a way have been said in prose. Heine, who in *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen*, had so clearly defined the function of *Erlebnis* in poetic work and had insisted on the very modest though indispensable part it plays in poetry, is here content to give us nothing more than his own

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, August 6, 1838.

² *Ibid.*, August 23, 1838.



HEINRICH HEINE, 1838

Painting by Julius Gieré

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crude personal *Erlebnis*, which by itself is no more interesting than the Saturday-night diversions of a dry-goods clerk. That is his offence, not the choice of a theme which is as good as any other when treated artistically, as it often has been. Nor is the nature of the *Erlebnis* anything to reproach the constitutionally erotic Heine with. Instead of passing moral judgments in this matter, judgments which are often hypocritical and always futile, because irrelevant, it would be more sensible to echo the regret of Legras¹ who says: "Instead of showing astonishment or indignation when speaking of *An Verschiedene* we should rather pity the poet, we should bitterly deplore the fact that our society of that time did not accord him a more intimate reception, and that the taste of the sensual young German should have been so lamentably led astray in the choice of a woman, or rather of a fat statue, to whom he was one day to give his name."

In these circumstances the poem *Atta Troll*, which appeared in instalments in Laube's *Elegante Welt* in 1842, proved as great a surprise as the publication of the *Nordseebilder* seventeen years before. It marks the rebirth of the poetic, more especially the romantic, phase. It was an astonishing and totally unexpected return to romanticism, the effeteness of which Heine had been mainly instrumental in demonstrating and proclaiming; one of those bizarre changes of front which have earned for him, whether deservedly or not, the reputation of being an unprincipled opportunist and a weathercock. There is no attempt on his part to palliate the apostasy; he knows he has changed and he says so frankly, nor does he bother to explain the change to his readers.

It had often been Heine's fate to throw himself with much ardour into movements and champion views which later he felt compelled to combat no less energetically. It is, however, absurd to set such changes down to sheer weakness of character. He was neither

¹ Legras, *Henri Heine poete*.

a philosopher nor a politician, but a poet. What philosophical and political views he holds are based not so much on logical necessity or consideration of practicability or public interest as on his moods. They are largely lyrical, formulated *ad usum poetæ*, and primarily not really meant to be shared by others, though, no doubt, Heine was prone to delude himself and to look upon himself as a leader and a propagandist in philosophy and politics. When, however, he applied these same views to the solution of the problems of the day, all kinds of unexpected inconvenient implications would emerge from the theoretical haze and give these views a totally different aspect. Heine had not only enough sense to see the difference, but the courage to say so.

There was, besides, an aristocratic trait in Heine's character which made him see in an unlovely light any view, though at the time it should be his own, as soon as it was adopted by the common herd. When he heard republicanism acclaimed by the crowd of the German republicans in Paris, it filled him with disgust, and when he found that realism, which he had himself championed, had ceased to be the privilege of a chosen few, he turned his back on it. This aristocratic aloofness went hand-in-hand with a strong dislike of all watchwords and principles which had become fossilized into dogmas, a fate which is apt to overtake even the most admirable general truths when they get into the hands of a crowd. Heine was not by nature a team-worker, and always abhorred the idea of sharing a common responsibility, especially when it was one for exaggerations and distortions his keen eye for the ludicrous and irrational never failed to detect. Whenever one of Heine's own cherished opinions was thus shown to be impracticable or, through becoming vulgarized and fossilized, threatened to imperil the liberty of his genius and become a chain, Heine felt "like the poor hen which after sitting on duck eggs is horrified to see the young brood rush into the water and swim about merrily."

When, in opposition to the romantic slogan "life permeated by poetry," the realists of the Young Germany movement inscribed the motto "poetry permeated by life" on their banners, Heine saw in this at first a chance for the regeneration of poetry. As it happened, however, Heine was really the only poet among them, and if some of the others wrote political verse it only rarely could be said to rank as poetry. Soon Heine saw that poetry was in danger of becoming the hand-maiden of politics, "a vivandière of liberty or a washer-woman of the Christian-German nationality." This meant the end of all poetry. Heine's opposition to the political poets Herwegh, Prutz and others, was not a matter of political difference, for their views were largely his, it was really the fundamental question of the very meaning and purpose of art. He clung to the principle of *L'art pour l'art*. Mode of treatment and form were to him the essentials, whereas to the political *Tendenzdichter* the subject-matter was everything, and unswerving allegiance to political convictions, no matter how obvious the mediocrity of the poet, was esteemed more highly than genius, which, being incalculable and imponderable, was suspected of being inseparable from want of character. This whole tendency was diametrically opposed to romantic traditions which had enthroned unhampered, purposeless imagination, and looked upon genius as of greater value than character, indeed placed the artist above the moral law.

Against what he considered to be a degradation of poetry at the hands of the *Tendenzdichter* he protested in the most effective way by going over to romanticism bag and baggage. He sounds the challenge to the *Tendenzpoesie* with unmistakable clearness at the beginning of the third canto :

Traum der Sommernacht ! Phantastisch
Zwecklos ist mein Lied. Ja, zwecklos
Wie die Liebe, wie das Leben,
Wie der Schöpfer sammt der Schöpfung.

Nur der eignen Lust gehorchend,
 Galoppirend oder fliegend,
 Tummelt sich im Fabelreiche
 Mein geliebter Pegasus.

Ist kein nützlich tugendhafter
 Karrengaul des Bürgertums,
 Noch ein Schlachtpferd der Parteiwut,
 Das pathetisch stampft und wiehert.

Of course as the main object is to ridicule the whole *Tendenzpoesie*, the poetry with a purpose, the poem is obviously not quite so *zwecklos*, so romantically devoid of purpose after all.

Atta Troll, the hero, is a bear who incarnates the *Tendenzpoesie*. It is true he cannot sing, but he dances, and if he dances badly he at least dances with conviction, and by dancing badly shows that, not being a genius, he has character. The captive Atta Troll and his spouse Mumma are dancing in the market-place of Cauterets, a small town in the Pyrenees. He breaks away and takes refuge in the mountains, where he finds his sons, to whom he expounds at great length a perfect medley of religious and political convictions. The poet and Laskaro, a dead bear-hunter, brought to life by his mother, the witch, start in pursuit, and Atta Troll is shot.

If Atta Troll stands for the *Tendenzpoesie* or, more broadly interpreted, the contemporary spirit, the poet stands for romanticism, and Laskaro represents the reactionary spirit, a mere corpse, which can only be revived by witchcraft. There are wonderful poetic portions of the poem containing nature descriptions of the Pyrenees and the weird passing of the spectral host on St John's night, mingling with absolutely unromantic modern features such as only Heine has the boldness and skill to introduce. The satire is perfect, and the Swabian poets, especially Pfizer, get, as usual, their generous share of it. To Pfizer he devotes the whole of an amusing chapter.

The hero of the poem suffers, according to Legras, from the very serious defect that he talks too much and, considering the length of the work, does nothing. His acts, we are told, ought to supply the commentary to his words. Surely this otherwise admirable precept is not applicable here, for if Atta Troll does nothing but dance clumsily, make his escape to seek safety in the wilderness, and then merely talk the remainder of his life, that is precisely what the political *Tendenzdichter* did, according to Heine. This is borne out by the stanzas which were part of the original version appearing in the *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* :—

Andre Zeiten, andre Vögel !
 Andre Vögel, andre Lieder !
 Wie sie schnattern ! Jene Gänse,
 Die gemästet mit Tendenzen !

Auf der Zinne der Partei
 Flattern sie mit lahmen Schwingen.
 Platte Füße, heis're Kehlen,
 Viel Geschrei und wenig Wolle.

Considering the delicious character of the twaddle Heine puts into Atta Troll's mouth, we rather regret he did not give us more of it.

The poem is written in an unrhymed trochaic metre which gives the poet ample opportunity to show his unrivalled mastery of the language.

Heine was, of course, not quixotic enough to imagine that by this delightful romantic orgy he could restore romanticism and the romantic view of life in German literature, for they were gone beyond recall, nor had he any desire to do so. He calls his poem *das letzte freie Waldlied der Romantik*. It is one of the many indications to show that Heine was at heart a romanticist. The blue flower of romanticism had not wilted during the long arid season of political and controversial prose. His genius would sometimes roam afar, but never failed to return to its romantic home.

A volume called *Neue Gedichte*, and published in 1843, was made up largely of poems that had already appeared in the different parts of the *Salon*, but most of the *Romanzen*, the *Zeitgedichte*, and particularly *Deutschland, ein Wintermärchen*, were new to the public. Barely one half of the *Romanzen* are really romances. The whole of this division is a mixture of romantic and realistic poems, of subjective and objective, of excellent and worthless, of old and new. Some belong in character to the Parisian *An Verschiedene*, and are therefore of comparatively recent origin, while others, like *Klagelied eines deutschen Jünglings* and *Anno 1829*, are fifteen or even twenty years old. There is thus no attempt at producing a unity of impression and no possibility of determining to what extent the return of the poetic mood heralded by *Atta Troll* has resulted in renewed poetic production, as distinct from mere publication. But no matter whether old or new, many of the poems are of a very high order of excellence. In spite of the abrupt ending of *Ritter Olaf*, which gives the poem the appearance of being a fragment, that romance alone would earn for Heine a foremost place among the writers of romances. There are quite a number of others, such as *Frau Mette*, *König Harald Harfagar* and *Die Begegnung*, showing us the poet at his best. To these purely romantic pieces should be added some impressive *Stimmungsgedichte*, like *Lass ab, Zuweilen dünkt es mich* and *Anno 1839*. That beside so much that is superlatively good we should find inanities like *Wechsel* and dyspeptic lines of the coarseness of *Unstern* no longer surprises us in Heine, however much we may regret that his own artistic intuition did not spare us the unpleasant jar produced on the mind of even the least squeamish of his readers by the last-named poem. After all, the worst that can be said by way of adverse criticism is that "le plus habile arrangeur" is not living up to his reputation, and that the poem is out of place where it stands.

Soon after the appearance of the *Lutetia* articles, in

which Heine showed himself the defender of constitutional monarchy and bourgeois conservatism, a few months only after the *Atta Troll*, with its bold challenge to political poets, his readers were startled by the *Zeitgedichte*, many of them political poems of an advanced radical character. We require all our faith in the doctrine of the absolute freedom of the poet in choosing his material and passing from one mood to another if we are to read without a feeling of surprise such a poem as *Wartet nur*, in which Heine speaks of the day when his voice will make palaces tremble and church spires crumble, or the bitter satire with which in other poems he attacks everything which in the *Lutetia* articles he had stipulated as the very bulwarks of civilization. Nor did these poems at all express the full strength of his radical sentiments, if we are to believe a letter he wrote to Campe in 1842, in which he enclosed one of the poems, *Nachtwächter mit langen Fortschrittsbeinen*. "Heavens!" he says, "if I wanted to speak really strongly, how people would be frightened."

In explanation of Heine's poetic return to the radicalism of his earlier years it should be mentioned that in the early forties there was a migration to Paris, partly voluntary and partly encouraged by the German police, of some of the most distinguished political thinkers of Germany, among them Ruge, Marx and Lassalle. Now, whereas the aristocratic Heine loathed the society of the unwashed and mediocre crowd of German radicals, he had no objection to association with these highly cultured and remarkably interesting extremists, who seem to have persuaded him, without difficulty, to become a contributor to the short-lived *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher* and the *Vorwärts*, which soon managed to become so offensive and vitriolic that the French Government had to yield to the representations of Prussia and to take action. The editor was imprisoned and most of the contributors, not French citizens, were expelled. What saved Heine was an impression

in official circles that he had long been naturalized, whereas in reality Heine never renounced his German citizenship.

It was in these publications that most of the *Zeitgedichte* appeared, and it is to them, just as much as to his political prose, that he owed the evil reputation he enjoyed in government circles in Germany. It would be hard to imagine more frankly scurrilous, yet at the same time more effective, satire than we get in the *Lobgesänge auf König Ludwig*. Unfortunately it is satire written for the mere satisfaction of being satirical, a brilliant exercise in gratuitous malevolence, the choice of the victim being determined by the ease with which he could be used as a target. So far from being a typical German despot, Ludwig of Bavaria was really one of the most liberal German princes of the time, whose private purse was always open in the cause of art and science. The fact that in years gone by he had found himself unable to appoint Heine to a professorship in the University of Munich does not seem to ordinary men an adequate reason for conferring on him this unpleasant form of immortality. It was more than sufficient, however, for the sensitive Heine, and when he remembered that Ludwig was very ugly and wrote wishy-washy poetry, he had both the personal motive and all the material he wanted, and the execution could be carried out. There was far greater justification for the massacre of Frederick William IV of Prussia, whose accession to the throne in 1840 had been heralded by a great flourish of Liberal trumpets, but who, by his vacillating policy, proved a profound disappointment to Prussian Liberals. There are few thinking men at the time who, though they might not say so openly, were not prepared to agree with Heine when he put the following stanzas in the king's mouth :

Ich ward ein Zwitter, ein Mittelding,
Das weder Fleisch noch Fisch ist,
Das von den Extremen unsrer Zeit
Ein närrisches Gemisch ist.

Ich bin nicht schlecht, ich bin nicht gut,
Nicht dumm und nicht gescheute,
Und wenn ich gestern vorwärts ging,
So geh' ich rückwärts heute.

It is clear that while some pieces are mere exercises in satire, others were directly provoked by the reactionary policy of Prussia, by events that touched him or his friends personally.¹ Prussia made it very hard for Heine to adhere to the policy he had laid down for himself in the *Lutetia* articles.

¹ See, for instance, his letter to Campe, February 28, 1842.

XXIII

GERMANY REVISITED

AFTER an absence of twelve years Heine suddenly decided in the autumn of 1843 to revisit Germany, more especially Hamburg. This decision was not the result of a recognition repeatedly acknowledged by Heine in prose and verse that the proper habitat of a German poet was Germany and not France, nor of an irresistible yearning to breathe again the air of the fatherland. Hamburg was of all places under the sun the very last where he would long to breathe his native air.¹ Nor would his affection for his mother and sister have proved a sufficiently strong magnet to make him undertake the journey which, besides being expensive, was at that time unpleasantly fatiguing and, in his case, considering the provocation he had given to the governments of German States, not without an element of danger. Also the thought of leaving his beautiful wife alone and unprotected in Paris, "the lamb among the werewolves," caused him many a pang, and might well have wrecked the project entirely, had not his financial difficulties made it imperative for him to visit the two men who were the main sources of his income, his uncle Salomon and his publisher Campe.

His financial worries had for some time past been aggravated by the state of his health. The symptoms of his complaint, a form of creeping paralysis, had lately become particularly distressing. The sensory nerves of the whole of the left side of his head were paralysed, his eyesight was seriously affected, often bringing him to the verge of total blindness. The thought of the incapacity and helplessness of his wife in case he died

¹ See the poem, *Anno* 1829.

caused him the gravest anxiety. "She is as inexperienced," he says, "and as helpless as a three-year-old child." The necessity of making provision for his wife had thus become a matter of the greatest importance. Salomon Heine was at that time paying his nephew an annuity of 4800 francs, about a third of what he required to live, and likely to become even more hopelessly inadequate should his illness necessitate increased expenditure. So Heine judged it wise to assure himself of the uncle's continued benevolence, especially with regard to Mathilde in the case of his own demise.

A personal interview with Campe was even more important. None of Heine's letters are more pathetic than those in which the poet, groaning under the crushing burden of his debts, largely incurred by the thriftless Mathilde, tormented by anxieties regarding his own future and that of his *Verbrengerin* tries, alternately by flattery and threats, by promises of increased productivity and bitter sarcasm, to extract from Campe at least a reply to his many letters. The latter knew what a desperately sick man his best seller was, yet he continued to add to the poet's discomfort and well-nigh unbearable irritation by leaving the most urgent letters unanswered for months. Those of Campe's letters we have are full of clever evasions of the point at issue, though we do not for a moment mean to suggest that Heine was always in the right. In any case a personal interview alone held out any hope of agreement.

As the Prussian ambassador in Paris had refused to *visa* his pass via Prussian territory, Heine had to travel by sea from Amsterdam to Bremen. He had the happiness of seeing his mother and sister, and found to his great relief that his uncle was as well disposed towards him as ever. He even met Amalie and Therese without, however, any resuscitation of the tremors of long ago. As for Campe, by cornering the beast in his lair, Heine was able to extract from him, in return for the exclusive right of publication, an annual payment of the absurdly

small sum of 2400 francs, to be continued to his widow. Even that was not an easy thing. "My publisher," he writes to Mathilde, "is the greatest rascal in the world, and it cost me infinite trouble to settle my affairs."

A few weeks after his arrival in Hamburg his love for Mathilde, the doubts that assailed him regarding the silly and compromising things she might do in his absence, if at any time she should take it into her head to stray from the secluded boarding-house where he had hidden her, left him no peace. During his absence of more than six weeks Mathilde does not seem to have written once even, which naturally increased Heine's anxiety a hundredfold. Her silence was due not merely to the total lack of ideas but also to want of familiarity with the mechanical process of writing. In one of his letters to her he says: "I trust you are practising handwriting, which is urgently needed." It was in any case a recently acquired art, for when Heine first met her she could neither read nor write.

About the 20th of December Heine returned again to Paris.

If the refusal of the Prussian ambassador to authorize his journey over Prussian territory had already predisposed the poet unfavourably toward the fatherland, his very brief stay in Hamburg was totally inadequate to clear his vision with regard to the actual political situation in Germany. A few weeks in Hamburg amidst the entertainments given by his relatives, and the business worries furnished by Campe, could teach him little of the political awakening of a Germany of which, five years before the revolution of 1848, he still thought in terms of romanticism: a dreamy blue-eyed maiden resigned to her fate and loyally submitting to being ground under the heels of her thirty-six monarchs. Nevertheless, he determined on his return to record his impressions in prose and in verse. All that we have, however, is the poem *Deutschland, ein Wintermärchen*. The prose essays were never written. He had told Campe that these essays were to deal with the

most noteworthy changes he had observed in Germany, but that during one of his periods of blindness the plan in his head became so ambitious that another journey to Germany was necessary to collect the material for what would become one of his most important works. Probably he felt from the very first that his information was really too threadbare to be worked up into anything requiring an accurate knowledge of solid facts. In a poetic treatment, on the other hand, his vivid imagination would readily come to the aid of the poet, with whom, in any case, what are ordinarily called facts are of minor importance.

When, in spite of the handicap of periodical blindness, he had finished the poem he was faced with the difficult question of censorship. The poem was not long enough to do without the imprimatur of the censor, and as Heine said, even if the censor was his own father, he could not possibly pass the bitter attacks on Prussia and her king with which the work bristles. He thought of having it published in France or Switzerland, he rewrote whole chapters to tone down the lurid effects until he considered it was almost too tame and innocuous to do him credit. It was finally decided to smuggle the poem past the censor in a volume containing other pieces making up the requisite number of pages.

Heine's estimate of the value of *Deutschland* wavered between two extremes. He told Meyerbeer that the poem was a political poem and a bad one, while he assured Campe that it possessed the permanent value of a classical work. Neither estimate is probably the outcome of his critical judgment: the former is more of the nature of a casual remark finishing a letter, while business considerations dictated the latter appreciation, which, unfortunately in the end, extracted no more than one thousand marks from the pocket of his publisher.

After the poetic charm of *Atta Troll* the reader may feel some reason to be dissatisfied with what appears to be largely a cantankerous effusion of the author's political spite. In mitigation of the offence we may plead that

he had a long score to settle with the Prussian Government. There was not only the ambassador's refusal of the *visa*, there was the memory, no doubt still fresh, of ambitious and possibly lucrative journalistic schemes Heine had hatched in Paris, and which came to naught through the hostility of the Prussian authorities, while at the bottom of his heart still rankled the resolution of the Bundestag to starve the poet by prohibiting the publication, or at all events the circulation, of his works. The temptation to hit back was made irresistible by the policy of the Prussian Government, which at the time gratuitously and without stint supplied the most ample material for any number of satirical poems.

A more serious objection to the poem is that the treatment of the subject matter is so very uneven. In contrast to the *Atta Troll*, which was poetic from beginning to end, we have in *Deutschland* long strings of stanzas that are undistinguishable from prose, and the poetic passages are really the exception. There is also this fundamental difference between the two poems: in *Atta Troll* there was a unity of purpose about the satire, a conscious superiority of the poet's personality to the victim satirized, and a consequent recognition on the part of the reader of the justification of the satire which we miss in *Deutschland*. Here the satire seems to arise rather from a feeling of impotence on the part of the poet. It is not the fighting of the swordsman, joyously sure of his attacks and parries, and glorying in his thrusts, but the wild and peevish hitting of an irascible combatant inflicting only minor wounds, and torturing his brain to invent novel and more deadly modes of attack, no matter whether above or below the belt. The reader has throughout a suspicion that Heine was really nonplussed by what little he caught of the different appearance of the situation in Germany, and that he found it difficult to get his bearings.

In his opening chapter the poet assumes that he is still dealing with the resigned and servile Germany of the early 'twenties, and he appears as the prophet of

the glorious new gospel of Saint Simonism, which everybody knew he had long ceased to believe in himself. The whole of the first chapter is as clever as it is obsolete. As an interpretation of Germany to France and of France to Germany it is a failure. France was busy with more serious problems than the emancipation of the flesh ; and Germany had in 1843 got far beyond the *Entsagungslied* of the little *Harfenmädchen* of the opening chapter :

. . . das alte Entsagungslied,
Das Eiapopeia des Himmels,
Womit man einlullt, wenn es greint,
Das Volk, den grossen Lümmel,

As he cannot, or will not, see the hopeful signs of the present, he despairs of the future of Germany, though, of course, we are not quite sure whether he really believes what he says, or is merely using chapter one as a poetic presupposition, or is simply determined to be as offensive as possible to all patriotic Germans. He certainly reaches the acme of offensiveness in the unpleasant vision of the twenty-sixth chapter, yet he writes to Campe : " Good heavens ! how much have I not held in reserve for a time of greater boldness ! "

While the satire as a whole is a failure, there are individual portions that are perfect gems in their way, either as satire or as poetry. The poet saunters along the streets of Cologne at night, followed wherever he goes by a mysterious companion, who is holding an executioner's axe under his cloak. When challenged by the poet he reveals himself as the man who carries out what the poet thinks :

Ich bin von praktischer Natur,
Und immer schweigsam und ruhig.
Doch wisse : was du ersonnen im Geist,
Das führ ich aus, das thu' ich.

Und gehn auch Jahre darüber hin,
Ich raste nicht bis ich verwandle
In Wirklichkeit, was du gedacht.
Du denkst, und ich, ich hand'le.

Ich bin dein Lictor, und ich geh'
 Beständig mit dem blanken
 Richtbeile hinter dir—ich bin
 Die Tat von deinem Gedanken.

That night the poet dreams that he roams again through the town accompanied by his muffled attendant. His heart is bleeding, and from time to time he dips his finger in the blood and marks the door-posts of some of the houses in passing, and whenever he does this a funeral bell is heard in the distance. Finally they enter the Cathedral, and there his lictor cuts off the heads of the patron saints of Cologne, the Three Wise Men of the East, those "skeletons of superstition."

Very amusing is the chapter in which, in passing through the Teutoburger Wald, he speculates on what might have happened if Arminius had not defeated the Romans, or the speech to his brother wolves whom the author of *Lutetia* assures, without a blush, that he has never ceased to be one of them :

Der Schafpelz, den ich umgehängt
 Zuweilen, um mich zu wärmen,
 Glaubt mir's, er brachte mich nie dahin,
 Für das Glück der Schafe zu schwärmen.

Ich bin kein Schaf, ich bin kein Hund,
 Kein Hofrat und kein Schellfisch—
 Ich bin ein Wolf geblieben, mein Herz
 Und meine Zähne sind wölfisch.

Besides we have the Barbarossa episode, the dream in the fortress of Minden, the meal at his mother's house, and the magnificent concluding stanzas he hurls at the King of Prussia, Frederick William IV.

It is an interesting symptom of the increasing laxity of the German censors that Campe found one to authorize the printing and publishing of what Heine in a letter to Marx called "this radical, revolutionary and anti-national poem." This fact alone ought to have opened Heine's eyes to the true state of affairs in Germany.

Towards the end of July 1844 Heine paid his second visit to Hamburg. It was not so unqualified a success as the first had been. He undertook it mainly to introduce Mathilde to the Hamburg relatives, Mathilde and her inseparable parrot. A few weeks were sufficient to demonstrate the hopeless incompatibility of the parties to this family reunion, and under the pretext that Mathilde's mother was seriously ill, Mathilde was sent back to Paris. If her presence in an uncongenial family circle had been a worry and embarrassment to Heine, her absence was an even greater care to him, as she wrote so rarely as to drive her doting and jealous husband wellnigh crazy with anxiety. "Since your departure," he writes to her, "I do nothing but sigh. I think of you without ceasing. I am suffering from my usual headaches, and these pains are fed and increased by the anxiety of my heart. I never want to be separated from you again. How terrible! I feel more than ever the necessity of having you continually before my eyes. Imagine then how it must agitate me to have no news from you!" Even a few days before his return his despair is greater than ever. He writes: "How could I be cheerful when I am far from you, my beloved Nonnotte, my dearest love, my poor sweet-heart, my only joy in this world! Don't forget what I have urged upon you. Those wretched Germans know that you are in Paris—be on your guard, don't let them come near you. Good God, the mere thought that you are in Paris without me makes me tremble. My poor lamb, you are in Paris, the capital of werewolves! Take care, some of them look quite tame; the worst kind are those who wear kid gloves; you know that you are safe only under the protection of your faithful shepherd, who is at the same time your dog. I am writing jests and my heart is bleeding." When at last he receives a sign of life from her he is beside himself with joy, he goes about singing and dancing and he visits the theatre, though he hardly listens to the performers: his thoughts are entirely with

her. Added to these anxieties there was the uncle's illness and obvious rapid decline and the persistent return of Heine's eye trouble. As soon as he could settle all the business, connected mainly with seeing *Deutschland* and *Neue Gedichte* through the Press, he hastened back to Paris. "A hint from above," as he wrote to Marx, made his speedy departure from Hamburg appear particularly desirable. "I have no desire," he adds, "to have the police after me: my legs have no aptitude to wear iron rings." It is not quite clear where such a hint could proceed from and how it could possibly affect Heine in republican and independent Hamburg. Possibly it was put in the letter for purely decorative effect to please the revolutionary Marx.

XXIV

TROUBLES

HARDLY two months after his return to Paris Heine was overwhelmed by the news of his uncle's death, "the saddest news he had received since the death of his father." "I would give my last shilling," he writes to his sister, "if I could have had him for another five or even three years; I would have given half the remaining years of my own life. . . . He has said many hard things of me. This summer in a moment of excitement he even gave me a blow with a stick. O God, I should gladly submit to another beating. If I could only weep!" Ten days later, however, his grief was turned to indignation when he learned that 8000 marks was all he was to receive out of his uncle's estate, and that a continuance of the annuity of 4800 francs was not even mentioned in the will. "You will have heard," he wrote to Detmold, "of the great misfortune that has befallen me. I do not mean the death of my uncle, but the way he has provided for me. I have long had the suspicion that some one has put the idea into his head that I should in any case squander any large sum if it was not seized by the government." The suddenness and completeness of the change of mood is almost amusing, though in the circumstances it was intelligible, as the poet, founding his faith on Salomon Heine's verbal assurances, never doubted that the annuity, without which he could not dream of living in Paris, would be continued until his own death, and that his widow would receive half that amount. His own impressions were confirmed by Meyerbeer, who had originally had a hand in the negotiations relating to the annuity some years before, and who stated definitely

that Salomon Heine originally settled the annuity on his nephew to leave him greater liberty for his literary work and as a provision for his old age.

It is not known exactly to what the change in his uncle's disposition was due. Considering the openly hostile attitude to Heine of the uncle's only son, Carl, and of a son-in-law, Dr Halle, Therese's husband, the omission of all mention of an arrangement so generally known as the annuity was probably not due to forgetfulness, nor is it conceivable that the heir to thirty million marks, Carl Heine, could have suggested the omission for reasons of economy. The sum in question was too contemptible. During the wellnigh two years of wrangling which followed, Carl Heine, without admitting any liability, paid his cousin almost the full amount of the annuity; two years later he paid a part of Heine's debts, and after the poet's death he raised the widow's allowance to 5000 francs. It is obvious that Carl Heine had inherited not only his father's millions but also some of his generosity.

A number of reasons suggest themselves for the often strained relations between Heine and his uncle's family circle: the contempt of the money-bags for the penniless genius, and the latter's undisguised attitude of superiority towards the golden calves of the unspeakable Hamburg, or the irrepressible wagging of Heine's caustic and ever-ready tongue, which spared neither friend nor foe. But the most potent of all reasons not only for the poet's unpopularity in that quarter but particularly for the strong attitude taken up by the relatives in regard to the annuity, was the fear of disclosures Heine seemed to have it in his power to make, and the determination to avert this peril threatening the family by starving the impecunious disturber of the peace into submission. Making the continuance of the annuity dependent on the good will of Carl Heine was evidently the best way to bring about this result. We do not know the nature of the threatened exposures, but no one can rise from the perusal of Heine's corre-

spondence relating to the famous *Erbschaftsstreit* without feeling that the revelations might have seriously damaged the reputation of one or several members of Salomon Heine's family.

The family had good and definite reason to be afraid. It was well known that Heine was writing his *Memoirs*. He had begun them in 1823, and by 1840 they had reached the fourth volume. Considering Heine's shocking want of delicacy and consideration in dealing with other people's feelings, Carl Heine might well think that it was in the interest of his family that these *Memoirs* should never see the light of day. In straining every nerve to prevent such publication he was acting in self-defence, and he can hardly be blamed for seizing the opportunity the omission of the annuity from the will afforded him. What is less commendable and shows the petty spitefulness of the man¹ was the quite unnecessarily protracted controversy, extending over a period of a year and a half, which left the poet a physical wreck and in the end gave Carl Heine precisely the same guarantees Heine had offered at the very beginning, namely, the signing of an undertaking never to write a line that might offend the family.² In view of the determination of the relatives to get what they wanted, the mediation and appeals of Heine's influential friends, such as Rothschild, Campe, Varnhagen and Pückler-Muskau, were destined to be wasted.

It was, of course, not all a time of worry and depression for Heine. He must have had many moments of intense satisfaction, for he could here fight to his heart's content. He showed his good sense in refraining from taking legal proceedings, the outcome of which was at best very doubtful. But there were other modes of warfare open to a man not overburdened with scruples.

Heine was in his element during the time of the insidious newspaper propaganda, the object of which

¹ See Carl Heine's characteristic letter to Fürst von Pückler-Muskau. Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, February 2, 1826.

² See letter to Campe. Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, February 4, 1845.

was to make life unbearably unpleasant to Carl Heine, who, according to his cousin, had, besides women and cigars, only one other passion, peace, and who had also another reason to avoid unpleasant notoriety: he was a candidate for a senatorship in Hamburg. The poet's method is set forth in a letter to Varnhagen of February 16, 1846. He composed scurrilous articles against himself which his friends were to get into the newspapers under an assumed name. These articles were not only to contain outrageous attacks on the poet's character, easily countered by the poet himself or his friends, but a very overdone and clumsy defence of the action of the Hamburg relatives, which was to make the latter very sorry for themselves, for it would show them that a defence of their attitude was no less embarrassing than an attack on it. We need hardly mention specially that a man of Varnhagen's self-respect declined to take part in this dubious underground method of warfare. Others felt less hesitation.

The controversy might have gone on for ever had not Heine's state of health grown so serious that the news of it spread to Germany, and the rumour of his death actually appeared in July in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*. Although it was immediately contradicted it made a deep impression on Carl Heine, as it conjured up before his eyes not only the prospect of seeing himself accused of being to some extent responsible for the death of one of Germany's greatest poets, but the possibility of the dreaded *Memoirs* falling into the hands of an incorruptible executor. So Carl wrote a very friendly and conciliatory letter to the poet, and the matter was settled on the terms the latter had proposed originally, as might have been done long before.

In fulfilment of the terms of the settlement Heine destroyed a large portion of his *Memoirs*. The loss resulting to students of Heine is irreparable. What he left was still further cut down by his brother Max, after the poet's death. A mere fragment, lamentably emasculated, is all that remains, and it sheds no par-

ticular light on anything we are really interested in, such as the Jewish environment of his early years. What makes this loss all the more galling is the knowledge that in 1837¹ Heine had offered to sell the right of publication to Campe who, for some reason or other, did not close with the offer.

The effect of the family quarrel on Heine's physical condition has already been touched upon, but there were other wounds he carried out of that fight which no annuity could heal. His confidence in his family was gone. Carl Heine, whom, at the risk of his own life, he had nursed through an attack of cholera during the great epidemic, had shown incredible hardness of heart, and even his own brothers had never stirred a finger to relieve the situation. To Heine, the Jew, with his Jewish notions of the closeness and the sacredness of the family tie, such cruel conduct proceeding from the very heart of that family was particularly distressing, and was bound to undermine one of the few beliefs he still retained. The situation was, of course, not improved by Heine's own threat to expose the family to ridicule and perhaps even disgrace, whereby he would become just as great an offender against the sacredness of the family as Carl Heine. That the breach was never healed and the injury never forgotten is shown by some stanzas of the pathetic poem *Affrontenburg*:

Wenn ich sterbe, wird die Zunge
Ausgeschnitten meiner Leiche;
Denn sie fürchten, redend käm' ich
Wieder aus dem Schattenreiche.

Stumm verfaulen wird der Tote
In der Gruft, und nie verraten
Werd' ich die an mir verübten
Lächerlichen Freveltaten.

Nachts, erfasst vom wilden Geiste,
Streck' ich die geballten Fäuste
Drohend aus—jedoch erschlafft
Sinkt der Arm, mir fehlt die Kraft.

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, March 1, 1837.

The years of the *Erbschaftsstreit* and those immediately following belong to the most barren of his life. Even the revolutionary year of 1848, which consigned the royal crown of France to the scrap-heap, endangered many a German one, and, in any case, showed that his own fatherland was politically awake: even the year 1848 caused no more than a passing tremor in his heart, evoking a mere memory of 1830. It showed clearly, if any further proof were needed, that there was next to nothing of the politician in Heine. Yet Campe had sent him astonishing news. The revolution had spread to Germany, the censorship was abolished, his works could now be published in un mutilated form, even in Austria. The only thing he seems to worry about is the distress and particularly the noise accompanying the revolution, which, he says, is pulling him down physically and morally. "You have no idea," he writes to his mother, "what misery reigns here. Everybody is now free and bankrupt." Heine had lost all his savings in the great upheaval.

For a short time he resumed the writing of his articles for the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, but his heart was no longer in it, the main reason being that in spite of his speech to the wolves in the *Wintermärchen*, he had donned the sheep-skin again, not because it kept him warmer, but because it fitted him better. Then came the worst blow of all: what reputation he still enjoyed in Germany for political integrity was completely wiped out when the *Revue rétrospective*, one of the journalistic mushrooms of the time, published a list of those who had been in receipt of pensions from the defunct French régime, and Heine's name was found among the recipients. The legion of the poet's reactionary enemies and the no less numerous radical detractors were jubilant and indulged in a noisy: I told you so. Even his friends felt compelled to admit that such a pension must have had at least a restraining effect on the journalist. The facts of the case, of which much has been made at all times, are simple enough. In 1836, just after the German Bundestag's decision to starve

the liberal writers of *Young Germany* into submission, the French Government of Thiers, on the proposal of the historian Mignet, offered Heine, as they had done in the case of many other distressed foreigners, an annuity of 4000 francs. No conditions of any kind were attached to the acceptance of the offer, and it was, therefore, perfectly natural and honourable for the distressed Heine to accept the relief offered by a foreign government with whom the fatherland was at the time on perfectly friendly terms. It was no more anti-German than it was anti-French on the part of Voltaire to accept an annuity from the King of Prussia. Heine declares he felt himself absolutely free to write whatever he chose about the French Government. Possibly a certain subconscious restraint is apparent to an observant reader, comparing Heine's journalistic reports written before December 1835 with those written after, but the difference is so slight that it was certainly not worth 4000 francs a year. In any case the very modesty of the sum speaks in Heine's favour. Had Thiers intended to buy a writer of Heine's European reputation, he would have had to put his hand more deeply into his pocket. With such an aim in view, 4000 francs would have looked like a mere tip.

When the secret first leaked out Heine was no doubt awkwardly situated. The very secrecy of the arrangement told against him. It is not strictly accurate, however, to say that he had concealed the fact from his closest friends. Weill knew about the pension in 1843: it is quite probable that Weill told Varnhagen in the same year,¹ and Kertbeny speaks of it in 1847.² The revelation, for it was one to the general public, was one of the reasons for discontinuing his political articles for the *Allgemeine Zeitung*; it made him impossible as a political correspondent. What hurt Heine especially was that the *Allgemeine Zeitung* should be the very paper to spread the news throughout Germany, insinuating at the same time that Heine had sold his pen

¹ Houben, *Gespräche*, pp. 428-433.

² *Ibid.*, p. 541.

to the French Government. Heine replied in a *Declaration*, in which he set forth the circumstances in which the pension had been allocated, and gave the very plausible reason for the secrecy of the proceedings "that the French Government may have judged it inadvisable openly to grant pecuniary aid to a man who was a thorn in the flesh of the German embassies, and whose expulsion had been demanded repeatedly." That he never quite got over the mortification caused by this exposure is shown by a return to the incident as late as 1854.¹

To crown his misfortunes, his illness had made such rapid progress that he was now almost entirely paralysed. Even in 1847 he was prepared for the end at any time, in any case he was convinced that even if he lived on life held no further joy for him. "There are for me," he writes, "no more beautiful hill-tops to climb, no woman's lips to kiss, not even a good roast to eat in the company of merry guests, for my lips are as paralysed as my feet." He took the last walk in his life in May 1848, when he entered the Louvre and fell down in exhaustion and despair at the feet of the Venus of Milo. After that, until his death, eight years later, he had to be carried about like a child. His legs were hanging from him like cotton-wool. The abdominal muscles were paralysed. One eye was closed, and in any case completely blind; the other had still some power of vision, but the lid had to be held open, if the sick man wanted to see. The frequency of atrocious spinal convulsions rendered lying unbearable, and the famous "mattress grave" had to be built up with cushions. Ever increasing doses of opiates only afforded temporary relief. His medical advisers made matters worse by subjecting him to one barbarous treatment after another, so that in August of that year, he could say: "It is certain that during the last three months I have suffered more tortures than could ever have been devised by the Spanish Inquisition." It was not until Dr Gruby, a Hungarian physician, with probably no more knowledge than his

¹ Elster, *Heines Werke*, vol. vi. pp. 373-91.

predecessors, but a good deal more common sense, took charge of the case that some improvement was brought about which made life more bearable. The horrible spinal attacks became less frequent, and his sense of taste returned.

Heine's illness arose probably from some inherited predisposition. His father had died of some affection of the central nerve system. Even as a boy Heine had shown abnormal irritability. His nervous headaches set in when he was a student at Bonn, and the first paralytic symptoms occurred as early as 1832. As his Paris physicians had diagnosed the case as one of softening of the spinal cord, which is generally of luetic origin, there has long been a tradition sedulously nursed by unfriendly critics from Goedeke down to Bartels, that Heine had as a student contracted syphilis, and that he died of one of the complications of that disease. Dr S. Rahmer,¹ however, basing his investigations on our more thorough modern knowledge of the nervous system, comes to the conclusion that Heine's illness was due to a spinal form of progressive muscular atrophy quite unconnected with a venereal origin.

One of the bright spots in the story of his sufferings is his constant anxiety to keep all knowledge of his desperate condition from his mother in Hamburg. He writes her the most cheerful letters: the utmost that he will admit to her is that his eyes are troubling him, or he will lightly touch upon a purely temporary paralysis of the facial muscles. When he fears lest his weakness might betray itself in his handwriting, he complains of the quality of his pen, and if he gives expression to any anxiety, it is entirely concerned with his mother's own health. In June 1848 he writes to Campe: "For the last twelve days I have lived in the country, miserable and unhappy beyond expression. My complaint has increased terribly. For a week I have been entirely paralysed, so that I spend the time on a chair or on my bed. My legs are like cotton-wool, and I have to be

¹ S. Rahmer, *Heines Krankheit und Leidensgeschichte*, Berlin, 1901.

carried about like a child. I suffer from the most fearful convulsions. My right hand is beginning to die, and God knows if I shall be able to write to you again. Dictating is painful on account of my paralysed jaw. My blindness is the least of my evils." Yet shortly before that he had informed his mother that he was tolerably well, and shortly after, the only reference to himself is "that he is leading a philosopher's life, retired from the world."

Heine's chronic financial worries were naturally intensified by his illness. The government pension being no longer paid, his fixed income derived from Campe and Carl Heine amounted to no more than 12,000 francs, while his expenditure soared, owing to his illness, to something like 24,000 francs. "Living in Paris is dear enough," he wrote to Campe, "but dying in Paris is infinitely more so." There were doctors and druggists to pay, nurses, and, as he found writing painful and often impossible, secretaries. His prodigal wife, "*die Verbrengerin*," as he calls her in his letters, besides being an incapable housekeeper, could not do without such relaxations as drives, concerts and theatres, which swallowed up considerable sums. As Heine's letters prove, such talents as she possessed did not lie in the direction of nursing. It is true, visitors were often favourably impressed by her gentle and cheerful ways of performing often unpleasant duties about the sick-room, but she was incapable of making a prolonged effort. Nursing an absolutely helpless and incredibly nervous patient for eight years would probably have proved an almost superhuman test of anyone's nursing capacity and endurance. While with her noisy ways she was often the last person to be in charge of a sick-room, there is no doubt that at times she made Heine supremely happy with her cheerfulness and her superficial and amusing chatter. Often when he was desperately ill, her clear voice would recall the poet's soul from the unknown regions to which it was about to take its flight.¹

¹ C. Jaubert, *Henri Heine, Souvenirs*.

The apartment he occupied in the rue d'Amsterdam was lamentably unsuitable. It was four stories up, sunless and cheerless, unattractively, almost poorly furnished, and worst of all, noisy. From the court arose the screaming of children, and from a neighbouring apartment came the ceaseless banging of a piano. When we add to this Mathilde's often inopportune gibble-gabble, the screeching of her parrot, the uproarious gaiety of her vulgar friends, we can appreciate the tragic meaning of his complaint of "the tomb without rest, the death without the privileges of the dead." That the multimillionaire Carl Heine could visit the poet in this wretchedly situated, dingy and meagrely furnished apartment, as he did several times, and yet do nothing to make the sick man's surroundings more endurable, seems hardly credible, but is nevertheless true.¹ Campe, meanwhile, was as stingy and irritating as ever. He supplied him from time to time with books, he fulfilled his financial obligations, but he added to the poet's distress by leaving important letters regarding business matters unanswered for months and even years. Heine's angelic patience in dealing with this contemptible and aggravating person is seen in the heartrending letters he addressed to his publisher in 1849-51.²

Apart from his wife and her undesirable friends and relatives, Heine saw little company. His French friends, like Gautier, Berlioz, Dumas and Béranger, did not altogether forget him, which is about the best thing that can be said. Only Gérard de Nerval and Taillandier remained in close touch with him until the end. He received the visits of his brothers Max and Gustav, and his sister Charlotte, occasionally also of distinguished Germans like Hebbel, Grillparzer, Meissner and others who were well repaid for their trouble, for Heine played the part of *le moribond spirituel* to perfection. He had, however, to close his door against the pestilential German

¹ See C. Heine's priggish letter to Maximilian, April 16, 1850.

² See Campe's ridiculously inadequate explanation of his protracted silence in a letter to Stahr of October 11, 1851, in Hirth, *Briefwechsel*.

journalists and other equally objectionable German residents in Paris, whose one desire seemed to be to unearth scandals in Heine's household. On several occasions the robust and peppery Mathilde proved an admirably effective watch-dog, whose method of dealing with intruders had an unpleasant air of finality, which discouraged all further attempts to invade the home of the dying poet.

XXV

THE ROMANZERO

THE fitful appearance of poems from Heine's pen in various periodicals between 1846 and 1851, combined with the knowledge of the poet's desperate physical condition, did not prepare the readers for the publication of what is held by many to be Heine's ripest work, the *Romanzero*. Most of the poems were entirely new, a good many had been composed during the endless vigils of nights of unspeakable suffering, written on huge sheets of paper with a hand half paralysed, dictated to his secretary next day, even the work of dictation rendered difficult by a paralysed jaw. According to his secretary, Karl Hillebrand, Heine took infinite trouble in revising during the day what he had written at night. "Nearly every time the poem was ready in the morning. Then began a filing which lasted hours; every present and imperfect was carefully weighed, the credentials of every obsolete and unusual word examined, every elision eliminated, every unnecessary adjective cut out, and imperfections deliberately introduced for the sake of effect."

The *Romanzero* would have been a great work anyhow, but, produced as it was amidst such difficulties, the achievement borders on the incredible. It was not merely a desire to make money and thus meet the enormously increased expenditure caused by his illness, but poetry had become a city of refuge from suffering, and he tells us how during those nights of torment, "when he hummed some of his verses to himself, they acted like magic chants subduing his pain; how in sleepless nights his imagination performed the finest comedies and farces, and how his soul became as calm as a mirror."

The title *Romanzero* is due to Campe, who in the summer of 1851 again interested himself in Heine and condescended to break his silence and reply to his letters. He paid Heine for the *Romanzero* the highest fee he had ever received for any work, 6000 marks. In spite of Campe's complaint that the publication resulted in a financial loss to him, it is pleasant to think that this was only one of his inaccuracies of statement, seeing that no fewer than four editions, of at least 5000 copies each, were called for within two months.

The *Romanzero* is divided into three parts : *Historien*, *Lamentationen*, and *Hebräische Melodien*. For once the title really corresponds to the contents. Besides, there is the same mood permeating the whole collection and only rarely failing to manifest itself, a profound pessimism, which grips the reader all the more poignantly as a contrast to the confident optimism, the jaunty, garish Hellenism of his younger years, forced though it often may have been for polemical purposes. Even the bitterest critics of Heine, those who have so often reproached him with insincerity and artificiality, at least grant that in the *Romanzero* Heine is sincere, a tardy discovery not arguing a very high degree of perspicacity. Heine made it easy for them on this occasion.

The opening poems of the *Historien* are *Rhapsenit* and *Der weisse Elephant*. They are no more than the cheerful curtain-raisers before the tragedy. The first is the story of the thief who robs the treasure of an Egyptian king, escapes from a trap set for him by the exercise of intelligence and resourcefulness, and excites the king's admiration, who rewards the most intelligent man in his realm with the hand of his daughter. The impressive proportions and the wonderful white skin of Countess Kalergis, celebrated by Gautier as *la symphonie en blanc majeur*, and christened by Heine *la cathédrale du dieu Amour*, are playfully represented in *Der weisse Elephant* as charms so irresistible that the white elephant of the King of Siam falls in love with the lady he has never seen. A more serious poem, *Der Schelm von Bergen*,



Paris den 27 July 1851

Trübe Stunden sind vergangen —
 Zu dem Wabstisch laufe geduldrig
 Aufzuwachen sie und für die Feile —
 Hat er wohl das weiß kein Wabst
 Geirig Geier.

HEINRICH HEINE, 1851

Drawing by E. B. Kietz

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serves as a transition to the gloomier pieces that are to follow. The executioner of Bergen has joined the gay throng of a masked ball given by the Duke at Düsseldorf, and has danced with the Duchess. His identity is discovered, and the Duke, with eminent good sense, wipes out the insult offered the Duchess by knighting the offender, thus letting the poem end on a cheerful note. In *Walküren* we have the first expression of the poet's pessimistic philosophy of life and of history: the defeat of the better man:

Und das Heldenblut zerrinnt
Und der schlechtre Mann gewinnt.

This is even more graphically brought out by the *Schlachtfeld bei Hastings*, in which Edith, a former mistress of King Harold, searches the battlefield for the body of her royal lover. Then we see Charles I of England cradling and singing to sleep the charcoal-burner's child, the mark on whose forehead betrays its destiny: some day the child will be his executioner. *Marie Antoinette* is the wild weird dream of a feverish night: the court of Marie Antoinette, her ladies of honour, all headless, but still observing all the rules of the strictest etiquette. Equally depressing are the poems of *Pomare*, the public dancer, the queen and idol of the *Jardin Mabille*, who dies in abject poverty, and of *Apollo*, who becomes a clown and visits the fairs accompanied by a loose woman.

All is fraud, fake, vanity and injustice. The Poles who, in 1831, had aroused the sympathy and admiration of Europe by their heroic and disastrous rising against Russian tyranny, now only excite the poet's contempt and ridicule as *Krapulinski* and *Waschlapski*. Even love means death, as in *Der Asra*. In *Der Mohrenkönig*, Boabdil, another of the vanquished, sees for the last time his beloved Granada, from whose battlements floats the flag of the hated Spaniard, the Christian. In *Der Dichter Firdusi* the recognition and the reward of the Persian poet come too late, for at the very moment when Shah Mohamed's caravan, laden with presents for the

poet, enters the city by one gate, Firdusi's funeral leaves it at the other. The longest and the bitterest song, having for its theme the noble vanquished, is *Vitzliputzli*, relating the treachery and cruelty of the Spanish conquistadores under Cortez. As examples of the poet's muse in her weirdest garb ought to be mentioned *Nächtliche Fahrt*, with its mysterious murder or execution, and the gruesome *Pfalzgräfin Jutta*, a tersely told episode of Jutta, who rows across the Rhine by night, followed by the bobbing heads of the seven lovers she had drowned to make sure of their constancy.

The impression made by the *Historien* is mainly lyrical. Heine has often attempted pure narrative, but has only rarely succeeded. His most sustained narrative effort, *Der Rabbi von Bacharach*, lost its objectivity as early as the third chapter, and there are few of Heine's ballads and romances that are not strongly subjective and the story of which is not woven around the personality of the poet. So in the *Historien* the important thing is the poet's pessimistic mood vividly conveyed by the story. The framework of the story is epic and objective, but the whole background is lyrical and subjective. While the setting is often strikingly picturesque, no attempt is made at historical accuracy, and the language is as often as not delightfully anachronistic, frequently descending to commonplace, modern speech.

The chief fault of the *Historien* is their inordinate prolixity, intelligible and even natural enough in the circumstances. It is pre-eminently the narrative method of the sick man suffering excruciating pain in never-ending nights, telling the stories not so much to the readers as to himself, spinning them out for fear of having to return to the unspeakable reality of weariness and torment, "just as children are always afraid that the fairy-tale they love to listen to might come to an end. What they are being told matters less to them than that the tale should go on."¹ Compare the admirable

¹ M. J. Wolff, *Heinrich Heine*, p. 588.

terseness of *Pfalzgräfin Jutta* and *Der Asra*, written in 1846—that is to say, before the physical débâcle set in—with the long-drawn-out episodes of *Schlacht bei Hastings* or *Firdusi*, composed in 1851. Heine himself was aware of the peculiar defects of these poems. He misses, he says, the artistic perfection, the spirituality, and the exuberant vigour of his former poems.

The first poem of the *Lamentationen*, *Atriden*, with its tale of cruelty meted out to his relatives by Don Pedro of Spain, looks in its present form as if its proper place were among the *Historien*, but the direct appeal of the subject of this family tragedy to the heart of the martyr of the *Erbschaftsstreit* is obvious when we read the stanzas omitted from the first editions and in Elster's edition relegated to the *Lesarten* :

Er erzählte mir zum Beispiel,
Wie der König dem Don Gaston,
Seinem leiblich eignen Vetter,
Abhaun liess die beiden Hände—

Einzig und allein, weil Dieser
Ein Poet war und der König
Einst geträumt, der Vetter schreibe
Gegen ihn ein Spottsirvente.

The title of the poem was originally *Familiengeschichte*.

Beyond *Atriden* there is nothing very noteworthy in this first part of the *Lamentationen*, nothing particularly characteristic of the period of publication; a few satirical, a few cynical poems, a melancholy sigh or two, that is all. Many of these poems might have been composed at almost any time of his life. It is in the second part of the *Lamentationen*, a section entitled *Lazarus*, that the poet casts off the cloak of the narrative and becomes frankly lyrical. As his sufferings increased, the narrative frame was felt to be a hindrance, and direct expression of the poet's feelings became more and more imperative. As there is no longer any story to enlist our interest, the poet's pessimism stands out in all its

cruel nakedness. "His versified heart's blood," he calls these poems. It is a cry of despair from beginning to end. Heine, the lover of life and the joys of love, the helpless cripple, yearns wildly to enjoy once more the love of a woman :

Noch einmal, eh' mein Lebenslicht
Erlöschet, eh' mein Herze bricht—
Noch einmal möcht' ich vor dem Sterben
Um Frauenhuld beseligt werden.

Und eine Blonde müsst'es sein,
Mit Augen sanft wie Mondenschein—
Denn schlecht bekommen mir am Ende
Die wild brünetten Sonnenbrände

Unjung und nicht mehr ganz gesund,
Wie ich es bin zu dieser Stund',
Möcht ich noch einmal lieben, schwärmen
Und glücklich sein—doch ohne Lärmen.

The only redeeming feature of this world is the love of a woman, and even this happiness lasts only a moment. Everything else is a lamentable failure. Heaven is uncertain and God is an arbitrary despot, and in His universe the worse man is invariably on top.

Es muss der Held nach altem Brauch
Den thierisch rohen Mächten unterliegen.

But though he complains of the senseless injustice and the utter hollowness of the world, he is resigned to his physical torments, which he bears with a mixture of heroic courage and grim humour. Some of the finest poems, *Gedächtnisfeier*, and *An die Engel*, are inspired by the thought of his impending dissolution and its consequences for Mathilde.

Das ist der böse Thanatos,
Er kommt auf einem fahlen Ross ;
Ich hör' den Hufschlag, hör' den Trab,
Der dunkle Reiter holt mich ab—
Er reisst mich fort, Mathilden soll ich lassen,
O, den Gedanken kann mein Herz nicht fassen.

Bei allen Thränen, die ihr je
 Geweint um unser Menschenweh,
 Beim Wort, das nur der Priester kennt
 Und niemals ohne Schauder nennt,
 Bei eurer eignen Schönheit, Huld und Milde,
 Beschwör' ich euch, ihr Engel, schützt Mathilde.

The last poem is *Enfant perdu*: the poet, a soldier in the war for freedom for thirty years, is dying:

Ein Posten ist vakant!—Die Wunden klaffen—
 Der eine fällt, die andern rücken nach—
 Doch fall' ich unbesiegt, und meine Waffen
 Sind nicht gebrochen—nur mein Herze brach.

The title, *Hebräische Melodien*, promises rather more than we really get. We expect a Judaism that has become poetry, and indeed we get such idealization in parts, but often the process has gone no further than mere verse, and the *Melodies* end in the unpleasant dissonance of the *Disputationen*.

While Heine has often spoken with respect, sometimes even with veneration, of Judaism, no man has said harsher or more insulting things about the Jews. No Anti-Semite could be more blindly vituperative regarding the Jews than Heine is in some of his early letters to Moser, and it is most significant that the person he has more virulently attacked than any other in his writings was a Jew, Börne. In the circumstances it was hardly to be expected that a poet in whom personal idiosyncrasies overshadow every other consideration should succeed in bridging over the gulf existing in his mind between Jews and Judaism. We feel throughout a jarring discord which too often destroys the illusion and leaves the reader high and dry on the sands of paltry commonplace. This happens even in the shortest of the three poems which make up the *Melodien*, in the *Prinzessin Sabbath*. According to the poem, Israel, like the prince of a fairy tale, has been changed into a dog, but every Friday evening he assumes his human form to be married to Princess Sabbath in the synagogue,

only to be changed into a dog again after the last Sabbath ceremony. The poem consists of a few pages only : at first a wonderful resuscitation of Jewish memories of the poet's early youth, and then lines, even whole stanzas, in which the poet, almost as if he were tired of the sustained effort, lets himself drop into mere prose and the imagery of commonplace life.

The second and longest poem, *Jehuda ben Halevy*, is the most ambitious as it is also the most sketchy and the most loosely composed. This epic of Jewish yearning tells of the education, the life and the death of the Jewish scholar and poet, Jehuda ben Halevy. The first two chapters may be counted among the best poems Heine has written. The story of Jehuda's education is most delightfully told, and the stanzas of the consecration of the poet are magnificent.

Ja, er ward ein grosser Dichter,
Stern und Fackel seiner Zeit,
Seines Volkes Licht und Leuchte,
Eine wunderbare, grosse

Feuersäule des Gesanges,
Die der Schmerzenskarawane
Israels vorangezogen
In der Wüste des Exils.

Rein und wahrhaft, sonder Makel
War sein Lied, wie seine Seele—
Als der Schöpfer sie erschaffen,
Diese Seele, selbstzufrieden

Küsste er die schöne Seele,
Und des Kusses holder Nachklang
Bebt in jedem Lied des Dichters,
Dargeweiht durch diese Gnade.

.
Solchen Dichter von der Gnade
Gottes nennen wir Genie :
Unverantwortlicher König
Des Gedankenreiches ist er.

Nur dem Gotte steht er Rede
 Nicht dem Volke—In der Kunst,
 Wie im Leben kann das Volk
 Töten uns, doch niemals richten.

In the third chapter the breadth of treatment of some of the episodes is wearisome, there are gratuitous interruptions of great length, clumsy and forced transitions back to the main theme, and the whole of the fourth chapter which follows on the death of Jehuda and his arrival in heaven is given up to a lecture the poet delivers, of all persons in the world, to Mathilde on Gabirol, Ibn Ezra and other worthies of Jewish literature. The poet has just described the joys of heaven :

Und das sang und klang so lieblich
 Und so lieblich in den weiten
 Himmelsräumen widerhallt es :
 Lecho Daudi Likras Kalle.

and then the next stanza begins :

Meine Frau ist nicht zufrieden
 Mit dem vorigen Kapitel.

We may be excused a feeling of impatience at this sudden drop from the sublime to the ridiculous, but the shock we experience should be softened when we realize that the transition from "Lecho Daudi Likras Kalle" (Come, my friend, to meet the bride) to Mathilde, whom the poet so passionately loved, is in Heine's case natural and tempting. To forget his sufferings the poet, in his mattress-grave, writes mainly for his own entertainment. He lets his imagination roam unrestrained, and the thought that he may be offending against any law of proportion or relevancy is the least of his cares.

In *Disputationen* a Franciscan monk and a rabbi have been appointed by the King of Spain to defend their respective religions according to the custom of the time. The loser will be compelled to adopt the victor's faith, a refined form of sport in the Middle Ages. The

poet has thus an opportunity of ridiculing the dogmas of both religions, which he makes use of with evident enjoyment.

The last stanza gives the decision of the Queen in epigrammatic form equally uncomplimentary to both religions :

Welcher Recht hat, weiss ich nicht—
Doch es will mich schier bedünken
Dass der Rabbi und der Mönch,
Dass sie alle beide stinken.

XXVI

THE "CONVERSION"

AFTER what has immediately preceded, the reader is not prepared for the shock Heine gives him in the *Nachwort* to the *Romanzero*, in which he announces his famous "conversion," his return to the belief in God and immortality. "I have returned to God," he says, "like the prodigal son after herding swine with the Hegelians for many years. Was it abject misery that drove me back? or was it a less contemptible reason? Heavenly homesickness came over me and drove me away through woods and ravines, over the dizziest mountain-paths of dialectics! On the way I found the God of the Pantheists, but I could make no use of him. This poor dreamy being is interwoven with the world and intertwined with it, imprisoned in it as it were, and yawns in your face, having neither will nor power. To have a will one must be a person, and to manifest it one must have one's elbows free. Now, if you want a God able to help—and that surely is the main thing—you must also assume that He is an extra-mundane person, and that He is all-good, all-wise, all-just, etc. The immortality of the soul, our continued existence after death, we get, as it were, into the bargain, like the fine marrow-bone which the butcher, when he is pleased with his customers, slips into their basket. In French kitchens such a fine marrow-bone is called *la réjouissance*, and you can make very nourishing soups with it which give strength and refreshment to a poor languishing sufferer. That I did not decline such a *réjouissance*, but rather took and enjoyed it, will meet with the approval of every man of feeling."

This passage gives not only the essence of his religious

beliefs at this period, but also the deliciously illogical method whereby he reached them, and the humour, with its peculiar sceptical touch, with which he treated so-called "solemn" subjects, a humour apt to make many readers doubt the sincerity of his conversion. Nevertheless his sincerity is beyond doubt, and his convictions are the outcome of purely psychological processes. As early as 1848, and on various occasions from then on, he tells correspondents and callers that a change has come over his religious views. In September, 1848, he tells Mme Jaubert of his sufferings, and adds: "Des pensées religieuses surgissent."¹ A few month later² he becomes more explicit, writing to his brother Max:

"Don't be surprised," he says, "if some fine morning my muse should turn pious. In my sleepless nights of torture I compose very fine prayers which, however, I do not get taken down and which are all addressed to a very definite deity, the God of our fathers. My old sick-nurse told me that she knew a very good prayer for cramp of the knees. So I entreated her to recite it while at the same time she was putting hot cloths around my knees. The prayer proved very efficacious and the cramps disappeared. What will they say of me in heaven? I can hear the angels, those who have solid convictions, speak of me contemptuously: 'Just look at that man without a character who, when things go badly, even has prayers said by old women addressed to the same God whom, when he was well, he shamefully reviled.'"

Very characteristic, too, is his confession to Mignet³:

"Je commence à m'apercevoir qu'un tout petit brin de Dieu ne saurait nuire à un pauvre homme, surtout quand on est couché sur le dos pendant sept mois, tenaillé par les tortures les plus atroces. Je ne crois pas entièrement encore au ciel, mais j'ai déjà l'avant-goût de l'enfer par les brûlures qu'on vient de me faire sur la colonne vertébrale; c'est un progrès car je peux me donner au diable, avantage que j'ai sur mes pauvres compatriotes athées qui en auraient cependant tant besoin pour le moment."

When Ferdinand Meyer,⁴ the archæologist, visited

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, iii., September 19, 1848.

² *Ibid.*, December 2, 1848.

³ *Ibid.*, January 17, 1849.

⁴ Houben, *Gespräche*, p. 652.

him in 1849 Heine seemed, according to the report, to be in an unusually serious mood, and he told his visitor without any commentary or humorous toning down that he had reached the certainty that there is a God who is the judge of our deeds, that our soul is immortal, and that there is another world where virtue is rewarded and evil punished. Judging by the sombre tone of Meyer's report of his conversation with Heine and his solemn approval of Heine's return to the fold, we may almost assume that if Heine had added anything to limit the effect of his confession of faith, Meyer might have considered the remarks out of place and have omitted them from his report. Compare with the foregoing what Weill¹ relates of a "religious" conversation which took place in 1851, the very year in which he announced his conversion to the public in his *Nachwort*:

"We are to be holy like Jehovah?" Heine asked. "What do we know about it? Who will guarantee that Jehovah did not play the same kind of pranks as Jupiter did with Juno, Venus, Hebe, and many other youths and young women? I would rather be the son of Jupiter, for I do not wish to exchange my living life for a living death. It is true we are given a draft on immortality. But has Rothschild signed it? We may never be able to cash it."

To the public the change in Heine's religious views might have appeared almost incredible. His readers had seen him in 1834² gloating over God dying before his eyes as the result of Kant's relentless argumentation. They had, as late as 1843, been assured that Christianity was definitely defeated; they had seen it compared to a beheaded fly which continues to live in a purely mechanical way, flying to and fro as if nothing had happened. To be told a few years later that during the night the poet often had serious talks with Jehovah might without due preparation have failed to carry conviction. So to avoid too great a shock, Heine breaks

¹ A. Weill, *Souvenirs intimes*, p. 108.

² *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland.*

the news of his conversion to the public very gently. In his declaration to the *Allgemeine Zeitung* in 1849¹ he contents himself as a preliminary with a repudiation of Hegelianism.

“When my spinal convulsions torture me too terribly, a doubt assails me whether man is really a two-legged God as the late Professor Hegel assured me in Berlin twenty-five years ago—I will confess frankly that a great change has come over me. I am no longer a divine biped, no longer the freest German after Goethe as Ruge called me in the days of my health; I am no longer the great pagan No. II. . . . I am no longer a joyous somewhat corpulent Hellene who cheerfully smiles down upon the melancholy Nazarenes. I am just a poor dying Jew, an emaciated image of wretchedness, an unhappy man.”

It was not until three years later that the public were definitely informed what the great change really amounted to.

As has already been said, the vulgarization of any view Heine held was apt to make his aristocratic soul turn against it, in which case his aversion would invariably extend to the holders of these views and all their works. The following passage from the *Geständnisse* is illuminating:

“As long as such doctrines (those of atheism) were the secret possession of an aristocracy of wit and talent and were discussed only in the language of an aristocratic coterie, unintelligible to the lacqueys standing behind our chairs and serving us while we blasphemed at our philosophic *petits-soupers*, I too belonged to these frivolous *esprits forts*. But when I found that the vulgar crowd, the proletariat, were beginning to discuss these same subjects at their filthy symposia lit by tallow candles and oil lamps instead of wax candles and chandeliers, when I saw that dirty cobblers and tailors ventured to deny the existence of God in the clumsiest pothouse language, when atheism began to smell unpleasantly of cheese, brandy and tobacco, my eyes were opened and what my intelligence had failed to grasp I understood through my sense of smell and the discomfort of my loathing and that was, thank God, the end of my atheism.”

His dislike of proletariat atheism was intensified by the fact that the German working classes, “these cohorts

¹ Hirth, *Briefwechsel*, April 17, 1849.

of destruction whose axe was threatening the whole social structure," professed the grossest atheism as an integral portion of their political creed. To his dread of anything approaching socialism, or communism, to give it the more terrifying name, he had already given the very strongest possible expression in his *Lutetia*, and from what we know of his mental habits it was only to be expected that a system of religious belief which was apparently so inseparably linked with a political theory he had come to loathe, should fall under the same condemnation. This is the starting-point of his "conversion": the aversion to "communism" and, as a corollary, the religious attitude of "communism." This would fall into the year 1839, when he wrote *Über Ludwig Börne*, and 1840-43, the years of the *Lutetia* articles. That socialism, which is nothing if not optimistic, should still further jar upon his feelings when his attitude towards the world was getting gloomier and more pessimistic, was inevitable.

When, in 1848, Heine's physical sufferings became unbearable and the blithesome and somewhat corpulent Hellene had become a poor sick Jew spending interminable nights of pain in desolation and solitude, when often even his muse forsook him, his childlike helplessness carried him back to the simple religious ideas of his childhood, he felt the need of some person to comfort and help him.

"In this state," says Heine in the *Geständnisse*, "it is a great blessing for me to feel that there is somebody in heaven to whom I can whimper the litany of my sufferings, especially after midnight when Mathilde has retired to rest which she so often sorely needs. Thank God, in such hours I am not alone and I can pray and whine as much as I like and without being at all embarrassed. I can empty out my heart before the All-highest and confide to Him many a thing one is in the habit of keeping even from one's own wife."

There is not a trace of mysticism in all this, scarcely even of spiritualism; its distinguishing feature is rather its robust utilitarianism. Heine henceforth tests the advantages and the convenience of his new-found

theistic faith in many and often startling ways. "Thank God," he says in a letter to Laube, "that I have again got a God, for now I can in the enormity of my sufferings afford a few curses and blasphemies, a solace not granted to the atheist." Wolff is probably right when he conjectures that if a mother or a sensible and compassionate wife had sat at his bedside, Heine would probably never have sought the way to God, and that there would have been no need to seek it.

Although in his last will, drawn up in 1851, he asks "the one and only God, the eternal creator of the world, for mercy for his immortal soul," the fear of punishment after death plays a negligible part in his conversion as well as in his theology as ultimately formulated. His God is not an independently elaborated conception of his new religious life, but is nothing more than a pretty crude echo of the Jehovah he had been taught to worship in his childhood, as rough-hewn and unspiritual as the image on the top of a totem-pole, a God who punishes in this world and in the body, whom he does not love but fears all the more. He is angry, revengeful and spiteful, and when you come in conflict with Him you had better knuckle under for He is too powerful to be provoked with impunity. At the same time he is a person with whom you can argue, whom you can scold and treat with the most lordly familiarity, as when Heine speaks of Him as the "great tormentor of animals," *der grosse Tierquäler*, or in the following passage from the *Geständnisse*:

"Alas! the scorn of God lies heavily upon me. The great author of the universe, the Aristophanes of heaven, is anxious to prove to the little earthly, so-called German Aristophanes, that his wittiest sarcasms are only miserable jeering in comparison with his own and how lamentably I am his inferior in humour, in the art of colossal jesting. Humbly I admit his superiority and I bow down into the dust before him. But though I lack the highest creative power, yet there flashes in my mind eternal reason and I venture to summon even God's jest before the bar of reason and to subject it to reverent criticism. . . . It seems to me that the cruel jest with which the master is visiting the dis-

ciple is rather long-drawn-out; it has already been lasting over six years and is getting somewhat of a bore. Further I should like to point out that in my humble opinion the jest is not altogether new, that the great Aristophanes of heaven has already played off that jest on another occasion and is therefore committing plagiarism against himself."

After this it is amusing to hear Heine speak of his conversion as the "return to the common man's humble faith in God." It seems a pity that when Heine sent up his invocations in the lonely nights there was no secretary to take them down.

His utilitarian conception of religion and the strictly limited use he has for God is expressed in a conversation he had with Adolf Stahr and Fanny Lewald in 1850. "Don't imagine that I am without religion. Opium, too, is a religion. When a little pinch of grey dust is strewn into the atrociously painful wounds made by the burning, and the pain then ceases immediately, shall we not say that this is the same calming power which manifests itself in religion? There is more relationship between opium and religion than most people imagine. Look at this Bible which I get read to me; it is a perfectly wonderful book, this book of books. When I can no longer bear my suffering I take morphia; when I can no longer kill my enemies I leave them in the hands of Providence, when I can no longer look after my affairs, I hand them over to God; only my money matters," he added with a smile, "I prefer to see to myself." We are not surprised to find Fanny Lewald remarking in her reminiscences that in spite of the reading of the Bible, and in spite of his talk about God and immortality, Heine was in these things the same as ever.

The thought of heaven and heavenly joys excites only the mildest interest in Heine.

"Much as I believe in a continuance of existence,¹ the thought of a passionless bliss and an eternal joy really makes me shudder.

¹ F. Lewald, *Erinnerungen*, p. 214.

If I floated about in blue space as a bodiless luminous shape and began all at once to burn and shine in the ether as a pure flame of virtuous gas, oh God, how terrible that would be! As a measure of precaution I have, however, burdened myself with so much passion that there exists really no need to be afraid of an ethereal state of bliss and its boredom."

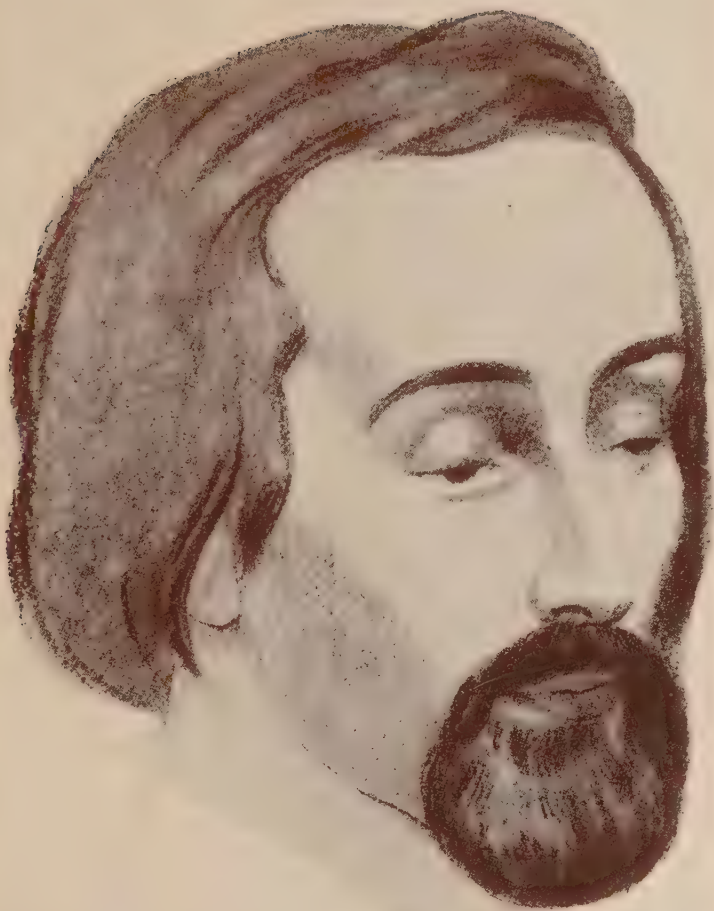
Clearly he would prefer an existence free from pain in this world to all the ecstatic joys of the other, and we feel that a complete recovery would be the signal for a return to religious indifference. Meissner reports a significant statement to that effect. "If I could only walk on crutches," Heine said, "do you know where I should go? Straightway to church." When Meissner looked sceptical, Heine continued: "Most certainly to church! Where else could I go with crutches? Of course, if I could go out without crutches, I should prefer to saunter along the smiling boulevards to the Jardin Mabille."

Of a faith which comforts and consoles, a faith which fills the heart with golden hopes of a better world, a faith which arouses a desire to know God and be with Him, of all this there is not a trace in Heine's religion. The only comfort it gives him is that it supplies him with a person he can talk and complain to in the long weary nights. His heaven is perfunctorily referred to as a place where you have your feet in soft bedroom slippers and listen to beautiful music.¹ God he neither desires to see nor to know, and his requests to Him are few and thoroughly unspiritual.

Oh Herr! ich glaub' es wär' das beste,
Du liessest mich in dieser Welt;
Heil' nur zuvor mein Leibgebreste,
Und Sorge auch für etwas Geld.

Ich weiss, es ist voll Sünd' und Laster
Die Welt; jedoch ich bin einmal
Gewöhnt, auf diesem Erdpechpflaster
Zu schlendern durch das Jammertal.

¹ Elster, *Heines Werke*, vol. i. p. 420.



HEINRICH HEINE

Drawing by E. B. Kietz

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Gesundheit nur und Geldzulage
 Verlang' ich, Herr! O lass mich froh
 Hinleben noch viel schöne Tage
 Bei meiner Frau im *statu quo*.

His faith furnished him no explanation of the otherwise incomprehensible, it does not answer any questions nor solve any problems more satisfactorily than the hypothesis of a purely mechanistic universe, rather it increases his difficulties and gives rise to new ones.

Lass die heil'gen Parabolen,
 Lass die frommen Hypothesen—
 Suche die verdammten Fragen
 Ohne Umschweif uns zu lösen.

Warum schleppt sich blutend, elend
 Unter Kreuzlast der Gerechte,
 Während glücklich als ein Sieger
 Trabt auf hohem Ross der Schlechte?

Woran liegt die Schuld? Ist etwa
 Unser Herr nicht ganz allmächtig?
 Oder treibt er selbst den Unfug?
 Ach das wäre niederträchtig.

Also fragen wir beständig,
 Bis man uns mit einer Handvoll
 Erde endlich stopft die Mäuler—
 Aber ist das eine Antwort?

As he was often inclined to take his sufferings as a punishment for the anti-religious sallies contained in his writings, he tried to have such offensive matter expunged from future editions of his works. Fortunately Campe objected, and Heine had to content himself with a second preface to the most "atheistic" of his works, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, in which preface he recanted his erroneous philosophical views, a somewhat futile proceeding, as everybody reads the work itself, a great classic of German prose, while few people read a preface, let alone a second preface. He assures us, however, that in his

manuscripts of as yet unpublished works he performed a great *auto-da-fé*, destroying every line that could give offence to the Almighty, "plucking out the poison flowers with a merciless hand." Fortunately he overlooked many a fine though, perhaps, from a religious standpoint, unedifying blossom, like the stanzas just quoted, beginning "Lass die heil'gen Parabolen," whenever the artist in him proved stronger than the theist. When Heine submitted these same lines to Meissner along with a number of others which he called religious poems, and Meissner expressed his amazement at the appellation, Heine replied: "Yes, it is a religious poem, a blasphemously religious poem."

Some of the numerous poems Heine wrote after the *Romanzero* were published in the *Vermischte Schriften*. Of about ten, without any apparent reason, he made up a group of a few pages only with the cryptic title *Zur Ollea*, which he incorporated in a second edition of the *Neue Gedichte*. The greater portion of the new material was not published until 1869, thirteen years after Heine's death, as *Letzte Gedichte und Gedanken*. As this last collection was not made by the poet himself, we miss the often ingenious artistic arrangement of earlier collections. Some of the pieces are poems which had been omitted from the *Romanzero*, as being of insufficient merit, and there are quite a number of "poisonous flowers" which the poet in his religious zeal, and to placate an offended Deity, had "plucked out with a merciless hand," but had forgotten to destroy. These were either strongly sensual or such as would have been classed by him among the "blasphemously religious" poems.

On the whole, these poems contain nothing new. The poet persists in his pessimism as one would indeed expect, seeing that his condition grew more helpless and more unbearable from year to year, nor is there any noteworthy development in his attitude towards the world, no advance beyond the bitter complaint that in this world the just man suffers, while the unworthy carry

off all the spoils of life. As a life after death, which the dying man is quite willing to seize as a last and only chance of something better, offers no attractive compensation for the sufferings in this life, the problem of existence remains without a satisfactory solution. A disembodied spirit appears to his rational experience as nonsensical and to his erotic heart as undesirable as ever. He has no hankering after the purely spiritual, which bores him, and without a body he would much rather cease to exist altogether.

Der Pelide sprach mit Recht :
 Leben wie der ärmste Knecht
 In der Oberwelt ist besser
 Als am stygischen Gewässer
 Schattenführer sein, ein Heros,
 Den gepriesen hat Homeros.

His relatives are not forgotten, and the poems show that the roseate sky of friendship and forgiveness, so much in evidence in his letters and conversation after the settlement of the *Erbschaftsstreit*, is in his dreary nights often overcast by the blackest clouds of vindictiveness, intensified by the galling consciousness of his impotence. He has not even a friend to take upon himself the office of avenger.¹

Very beautiful are some of the verses expressing his passionate love for Mathilde, his despair at the thought of having to leave her without a protector, exposed to all the perils of life, especially the pathetic poem beginning :

Ich war, o Lamm, als Hirt bestellt,
 Zu hüten dich auf dieser Welt.

His longing for death, blending with the wild regret for the days of his youth and strength, he planned to set forth in *Bimini*, a narrative poem which has, unfortunately, remained a fragment. It was to be the story of Ponce de Leon, one of the Spanish conquistadors,

¹ See the poems Nos. 63-68 in vol. ii. of Elster's edition.

who sets out to discover Bimini, the fountain of youth. Unfortunately, Heine has here returned to the prolix narrative method of the *Historien*, so twenty pages are taken up with purely introductory matter and long-drawn-out descriptions. When the knight has at last been permitted to set sail and the poet has promised us a faithful account of Ponce de Leon's adventures, he breaks off and gives the concluding stanzas of the story, which are the most impressive of the poem. He tells us how his hero, instead of being healed of the weakness and the complaints of old age, becomes ever older and more decrepit in search of youth, until at last, wrinkled and emaciated, he reached

. . . das stille Land, wo schaurig
Unter schattigen Cypressen
Fließt ein Flösslein, dessen Wasser
Gleichfalls wundertätig heilsam.

Lethe heisst das gute Wasser !
Trink daraus, und du vergisst
All dein Leiden—ja vergessen
Wirst du, was du je gelitten.

Gutes Wasser ! Gutes Land !
Wer dort angelangt, verlässt es
Nimmermehr—denn dieses Land
Ist das wahre Bimini.

Taken all together the poems written after the *Romanzero*, while comprising some pieces of heartrending pathos and some brilliant verse, contain a vast amount that is positively wearisome, and, as poetry, often perfectly worthless. They nevertheless afford us a glimpse of the thoughts and themes that occupied his tortured hours at night. His interests are precisely the same they ever were: he is neither more nor less spiritual, and the change of which we read so much in his letters, prefaces, conversations and the *Geständnisse* has given us nothing that can by any stretch of the meaning of the word be called deeply religious, except perhaps

"Ich war, o Lamm, als Hirt bestellt," and even there he is clearly more interested in Mathilde than in God. It is also interesting to note that in spite of his assurance to Fanny Lewald that Christianity, though useless to those in good health on account of its resignation and other-worldliness, is an excellent religion for the sick, he finds no use for it in his own case.

Since the *Romanzero* Heine's European fame had grown apace. In France as well as in England translations on an extensive scale were being prepared, and the interest shown in the works and the personality of Heine was unprecedented in the history of any German writer, not excepting Goethe. Heine had been contemplating for some time the publication of his complete works, to which, considering his desperate physical condition, little was likely to be added now. At the same time he had decided that the time had come to give the public a connected account of his philosophic and religious evolution. This latter plan he carried out in 1854, when he wrote his *Geständnisse*, one of the most brilliant of his shorter prose writings.

Having explained the object of the work, and happening to mention the French title, *De l'Allemagne*, of his own book on Religion and Philosophy in Germany, he is reminded of the similar title of Mme de Staël's famous work. This suffices to make him completely forget what he had set out to do, and as the result there follows the most irrelevant but also the most entertaining and witty causerie written in his best manner. As this may prove a kind of farewell performance, he shows off a perfect menagerie of his *bêtes noires*, or, more exactly, resuscitates them for the purpose of the show, for most of them he had already exhibited and killed several times in previous works. He begins with Mme de Staël, whose charming foibles, literary and personal, he brings out so graphically, with such a wealth of amusing anecdote and witty innuendo, that we seem to see her with the same convincing clearness with which he had years ago drawn for us the portrait of Börne by

the same method. Then follow the other victims selected for the occasion : August Wilhelm von Schlegel, and his brother Friedrich, Zacharias Werner, Baron von Eckstein, Chateaubriand, and the man without whom none of Heine's public executions would be complete, Menzel. Then only is he ready to proceed with the narrative of his evolution, taking his emigration to France as his starting-point. He naturally revels in his reminiscences of the first years in Paris and of the time when he was the interpreter of Germany to France. This brings him to his first *Geständniss*, the recantation of his philosophical atheism, to which reference has already been made in connection with his "conversion," and more especially his abjuration of Hegelian philosophy, which is one of the most entertaining portions of the work.

It flattered Heine to make a great deal of this repudiation of Hegel. There was really very little to repudiate. It will be remembered that in *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* Heine had treated the subject of Hegelian philosophy with extreme caution, and in such general terms that the reader might well suspect that the difficulty of presenting Hegel's system to the average Frenchman was not the only reason for Heine's lack of explicitness, but that lack of familiarity with the subject was probably at bottom of the author's modesty. In the *Geständnisse* Heine assures us that he had intended to give the French a fuller account of Hegelianism in a second edition of *De l'Allemagne*, indeed that for two years he had been hard, and we may add secretly, at work trying to express even the most abstract portions of that philosophy in "popular" language! When he had finished the work "he was overcome by an uncanny dread, it seemed to him that the manuscript was looking at him with strange, ironical, wicked eyes." The fact was, the author and his work had drifted apart. The repugnance to atheism had at that time already invaded his mind, and as "Hegelianism aids and abets this impious wickedness," it had to share

the fate of atheism. The "refutation" of Hegelianism in this and what follows is, of course, more amusing than logical, and the author does not show any deeper knowledge of Hegel than he possessed in 1832, in spite of the apocryphal two years' study of the philosopher. The revival of his religious feelings he attributes to the reading of the Bible, and as the result he tells us "he has reached the same standpoint as Uncle Tom, indeed he is kneeling beside his black brother in the same devotion."

The glowing panegyric of Moses which follows is very fine, though Heine's supposition that "the Mosaic God was perhaps only a reflection of the glory of Moses himself" might have puzzled and even deeply shocked Heine's black brother, Uncle Tom. The disquisition on the cultural importance of Judaism and the spiritual relationship of Jews and Germans naturally aroused energetic protests in Germany, especially among those who were slow to realize what a cultural force the Jews had already become in Germany. The last portion of the work is devoted to an exposition of the author's views on Protestantism and Catholicism, an exposition of a most conciliatory and often fulsomely laudatory character. Not even the Jesuits are forgotten in this general distribution of rose-water and lavender.

A few prose works published between 1851 and 1856 still deserve to be briefly mentioned. The first is *Dr Faust*. The full original title is *Dr Faust, ein Tanzpoem nebst kuriosen Berichten über Teufel, Hexen und Dichtkunst*. It was written at the request of Benjamin Lumley, Director of Her Majesty's Theatre in London. Although generously remunerated, it was never performed. Probably the lascivious love-making which is an important feature would have proved too much anyhow for the austere court morals of Queen Victoria's reign.

Dr Faust is really nothing more than a ballet scenario of little literary merit. According to the plot, Faust sells his soul to Mephistophela, a she-devil, who gets him entangled in a love affair with a very beautiful

duchess who is even a more wicked demon than Mephistophela herself. There follow the relations between Faust and Helen of Troy. Later, when Faust marries a simple German girl, Mephistophela claims his soul, and he goes down to his doom in hell.

How Heine could not only mention this merest sketch in the same breath as Goethe's magnificent poem, but actually place his own work in some respects above Goethe's, is hard to understand. He misses in Goethe's *Faust* faithfulness to the medieval legend and reverence for its real spirit. We must add, however, that Heine's opinion of his own work underwent the usual metamorphosis, for, whereas at first he called it "one of the greatest and most poetic productions," and was convinced that it contained a discussion of "very serious questions of art and literature," he attached very little importance to the *Faust* scenario not long after. We know that as far back as 1824 Heine had planned a *Faust* drama, possibly for no better reason than that "every man ought to have written a *Faust*," as he once said to his friend Wedekind. This, as the reader may remember, did not seem to be the view of Goethe at the time of Heine's visit to Weimar. About that time Heine had various talks about his *Faust* project with Wedekind, and if the grotesque details in the latter's Diary¹ are not a mere hoax on the part of Heine, we shall not hesitate to give full assent to Heine's assurance that "he had no wish to rival Goethe."


Die Götter im Exil is a mere fragmentary sequel to the *Elementargeister*. The poet continues his folkloristic studies, and interests himself particularly in the fate of the ancient heathen deities who have been changed into demons under the Christian régime and are allowed to meet only once a year to celebrate their pagan ceremonies.

In *Die Göttin Diana* we have another scenario of a ballet, or rather a sketch of one dealing with the tender relations between the goddess Diana and a medieval

¹ Houben, *Gespräche*, p. 75.

knight, the death of the latter and his glorious resurrection, of course in the Venus Mountain.

An essay in memory of his old companion in arms, Ludwig Marcus, published in the *Vermischte Schriften*, though written as far back as 1844, concludes the imposing array of Heine's prose works. Heine and Marcus had both been members of the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*, fighting bravely for what later appeared to them a hopeless cause, and both had drifted into voluntary exile in Paris. "Get your wife to give you a cushion," Heine wrote to Campe, "and read this on your knees, for you will not often have an opportunity to adore so good a style." It is indeed style and very little else, Heine and a minimum of Marcus. It has most of the features we expect to find in Heine, no matter what the occasion: enthusiasm and cynicism, humour and sarcasm, and that without which not even the shortest essay would be complete, an attack on some former associate. This time the axe falls on Gans, also formerly a prominent member of the Verein, and the first to go over to the enemy.



XXVII

LA MOUCHE

FOR six long years Heine had lived in the depressing flat of the *rue d'Amsterdam*, sunless and cheerless, noisy and insanitary. At last the remuneration he received for the *Vermischte Schriften* enabled him to move into a little house with a garden at Batignolle, almost in the country. The description Heine received of it before moving in sounded attractive enough, but, in the end, the place chosen by Mathilde proved the reverse of suitable for the sick poet. It was as noisy as the town house and, in addition, very damp. A few months sufficed to demonstrate even to Mathilde that this idyllic *Gartenwohnung* was endangering her husband's life and another move had to be made, the last, to the *Avenue Matignon*, a very fortunate choice this time. The apartment was sufficiently high up to be above the worst of the street noises, it was sunny, and had a balcony overlooking the wonderful Champs Élysées, a source of great delight to the poet, who seemed at last to get into touch again with his beloved Paris. Here Heine spent the last years of his life amidst sufferings which did not abate until the spring of 1855, when for a while he was able to do his own writing again. His temporary improvement also allowed him to enjoy the visit of many Germans the Exhibition brought to Paris, among them his sister Charlotte, his brother Gustav, and a number of more or less distinguished literary men and women.

In the month of June 1855, there glided into Heine's life a mysterious figure which after his death disappeared as it had come, a woman described by Charlotte, the poet's sister, as of charming and youthful appearance ;

she was pretty rather than beautiful, had wavy, light-brown hair, merry, roguish eyes, a little snub nose, a small mouth showing pearly white teeth when she spoke or smiled, and she was uncommonly graceful in all her movements. This estimate of one woman by another is not likely to err on the side of adulation, although the description does not seem to tally with a photograph of the young woman taken in 1860, and showing an unusually unprepossessing face. This is probably the fault of the photograph, as Meissner, and indeed everybody that met her, agree with Charlotte's judgment. Her identity remained wrapped in mystery until the publication, in 1884, of Alfred Meissner's *Geschichte meines Lebens*, and the appearance the same year of *Les derniers jours de Henri Heine*, by Camille Selden, the mysterious visitor herself. She was of German origin, had lived in France, where she contracted a marriage with a man quite unworthy of her, who, after trying to get rid of her by having her confined in an asylum in England, left her. Before she met Heine she had had a romantic liaison with Alfred Meissner. Even the little we thus know of her with any degree of certainty has in the eyes of some spoilt somewhat the legendary portrait of the ethereal, almost supernatural incarnation of *das ewig Weibliche*, who brought joy and comfort to the bedside of the dying poet. Others will probably take a more sensible view, feeling that her *passé intéressant*, to which the Princess Belgiojoso and Meissner refer, shows her to be precisely the loving and ardent woman, the natural object of the poet's indubitably sensuous passion.

Camille Selden, or, as Heine called her, *Mouche*, after the seal with which she sealed her letters, presented herself at the Avenue Matignon in June 1855. She was the bearer of some music from one of Heine's Viennese friends. This she delivered at the door, and was on the point of leaving without seeing Heine when the poet, hearing her voice, invited her to enter. In a darkened room she saw the sick, almost blind, poet, and

was immediately fascinated by the "Christ-head with its Mephistophelean smile." Though requested to return soon she looked upon this invitation as a mere formality and stayed away. The invitation had to be repeated in writing before she acted on it. The mere statement of these facts is surely an answer to M. Lichtenberger's question "whether she was much more than a literary adventuress eager for new emotions."¹

The Mouche now became a constant visitor in the *Avenue Matignon*. Heine, who could not resist the charm of her voice when he first heard it, and on whom her whole appearance had made a deep impression, found her, in addition, to be an unusually intelligent and cultured woman, capable of penetrating and sharing his subtlest emotions and surrounding him with a sympathy and affection he had never met with in any woman. Very quickly his friendship for her ripened into the most deeply tragic passion of his life. He loved her with all the ardent yearning of which he was capable, with an intensity increased a hundredfold by the very hopelessness of his passion.

The episode has been called an instance of Heine's spiritual love. This is misrepresenting the case. His mode of manifesting his love was obviously mainly non-physical, inevitably so in the case of a lover who is paralysed from his chest down. But Heine never ceases to regret it, and his regret is as erotic and unspiritual as the love yearning of his younger days. "I am glad," he writes to her, "I shall soon see you again and imprint a kiss on your pretty face. Alas! these words would hold a less platonic meaning if I were still a man. Unfortunately I am only a spirit. This may, of course, suit you, but it does not suit me at all." All his letters and notes to her, written when he is too desperately ill to see her, are love letters often expressing in the most pathetic manner the desperate cry of his heart and of his body for the unattainable. Though his body is a mere memory, a lamentably inert thing of

¹ H. Lichtenberger, *Henri Heine, Penseur*.

the past, he tastes the bitterness of "a dead man thirsting for the most ardent joys of life." "Never," he writes, "was a poet more miserable in the fulness of his happiness which seems to mock me."

Sometimes his unconquerable humour comes to his aid and relieves the pathos of the situation, as in the poem beginning :

Wahrhaftig wir beide bilden
Ein kurioses Paar,
Die Liebste ist schwach auf den Beinen,
Der Liebhaber lahm sogar.

Or in :

Worte ! Worte ! keine Taten !
Niemals Fleisch, geliebte Puppe,
Immer Geist und keinen Braten,
Keine Knödel in der Suppe !

Then, again, this poor physical wreck will compose the most virile lines expressive of the triumphant consciousness of the power he wields over his beloved :

Dich fesselt mein Gedankenbann,
Und was ich dachte, was ich sann,
Dass musst du denken, musst du sinnen—
Du kannst nicht meinem Geist entrinnen.

Stets weht dich an sein wilder Hauch
Und wo du bist, da ist er auch ;
Du bist sogar im Bett nicht sicher
Vor seinem Kusse und Gekicher !

Mein Leib liegt tot im Grab, jedoch
Mein Geist, der ist lebendig noch
Er wohnt gleich einem Hauskobolde
In deinem Herzchen, meine Holde!

.
Denn überall, wohin du reist,
Sitzt ja im Herzen dir mein Geist,
Und denken musst du, was ich sann—
Dich fesselt mein Gedankenbann !

Camille Selden acted for a time as Heine's secretary and reader, and, having a perfect knowledge of both French and German, sound literary taste, and a wide general culture, she was able to take the place of the secretary who had left him shortly before her arrival. Apart from that their relations, their talk, their letters were those of lovers from within a few weeks of her first appearance to the last sad meeting shortly before the poet's death, a meeting they both felt to be the last. "When I entered," she says, "I was struck by the extreme pallor of his lips, and I found him sad and gloomy under the influence of that mood which is called forth by a dull day in winter. 'There you are at last,' he called out to me. He had often received me with these words, but to-day he spoke them in a less loving, an almost severe tone. So he too misjudged me! The injustice of the reproach cut deep into my heart, yet I could not explain to so sick a man that in order to come I had to leave my own sick-bed. This strain tortured me and I burst into tears. Suddenly, as if he felt what I suffered, and although he could not see my face, he called me to him and made me sit on the edge of his bed. The tears which rolled down my pale cheeks seemed to affect him deeply. 'Take off your hat that I may see you better,' he said. And with a caressing gesture he pulled the ribbon of my hat. With a quick and hasty movement I pushed back my hat and glided down by the side of his bed. Was it the bitter memory of sufferings endured or an even worse foreboding of coming disaster? Enough, I tried in vain to repress my sobs; I could no longer control myself, I was afraid I should have to succumb to the storm which raged in my heart. Not a word was exchanged, but the hand of the friend which lay on my head seemed to bless me. This was our last meeting.

"I had already crossed the threshold of the room and had got to the stair when once more the sound of the beloved voice, distinct yet trembling, anxiously reached my ear. 'To-morrow, do you hear? don't delay.'"

A few days later, on the 17th of February 1856, the poet was released from his sufferings.

For the last time the *Erlebnis* brought out his lyric powers in all their splendour and variety of expression in the poem written about this time, *Es träumte mir von einer Sommernacht*. The poet is dreaming of a moonlit summer night. In the midst of ruined pillars, portals and statues there stands an open marble sarcophagus, and in it lies a dead man. The sarcophagus is covered with sculpture representing pagan and biblical figures and incidents: Jove and Venus, Paris, Helen, Judith, Moses and St Peter, and even a speaking likeness of the ass of Balaam. Suddenly the poet realizes that he himself is the dead man. At his head there stands a mysterious flower, yellow and violet, the passion flower, containing within its calyx the instruments of martyrdom: scourge, hammer, nails, crown of thorns and cross. This flower bends down over the poet and, in disconsolate silence, kisses his hand, his forehead and his eyes. Then by the witchery of the dream the passion flower is changed into the face of the beloved.

Du warst die Blume, du geliebtes Kind,
An deinen Küssen musst' ich dich erkennen.
So zärtlich keine Blumenlippen sind,
So feurig keine Blumentränen brennen !

Geschlossen war mein Aug', doch angeblickt
Hat meine Seel' beständig dein Gesichte,
Du sahst mich an, beseligt und verrückt
Und geisterhaft beglänzt vom Mondenlichte.

Wir sprachen nicht, jedoch mein Herz vernahm,
Was du verschwiegen dachtest im Gemüte—
Das ausgesprochne Wort ist ohne Scham,
Das Schweigen ist der Liebe keusche Blüte.

Lautloses Zwiegespräch ! man glaubt es kaum,
Wie bei dem stummen, zärtlichen Geplauder
So schön die Zeit verstreicht im schönen Traum
Der Sommernacht, gewebt aus Lust und Schauder.

Was wir gesprochen, frag es niemals, ach !
 Den Glühwurm frag, was er im Grase glimmert,
 Die Welle frage, was sie rauscht im Bach,
 Den Westwind frage, was er weht und wimmert.

Frag, was er strahlet den Karfunkelstein,
 Frag, was sie duften, Nachtviole und Rosen—
 Doch frage nie, wovon im Mondenschein
 Die Marterblume und ihr Toter kosen !

This dream of love is shattered by a great noise. An acrimonious discussion has arisen among the figures sculptured on the side of the sarcophagus, and representing the two ever-warring factions of mankind, Barbarians and Hellenes, the champions of cold, unattractive Truth and those of the Beautiful. In the end all voices are drowned by the braying of Balaam's ass, and the poet awakes.

It is remarkable that the poet's career should end as it had begun, with a Traumbild, and that his last poem should sum up almost all the main features of his work : the prolix narrative, romantic symbolism, the deep love passion, a touch of humour, a bit of nature description, and at the end the sarcasm of the pessimistic note as from the wearily climbed pinnacle of his existence he cast a last glance back upon the irreconcilable conflict between Truth and Beauty and the defeat of both by Stupidity.

With what eyes did Mathilde regard this passionate episode, which to a woman of average intelligence would have demonstrated conclusively her own inadequacy as a wife in the best and fullest sense of the word ? Some, like Wolff, imagine that Mathilde had not the brains to see how seriously it really affected her. This view of her perspicacity seems to be confirmed by what Meissner tells us in his *Letzte Erinnerungen*. When, years after Heine's death, Meissner, during a visit to Mathilde, touched upon the subject of *La Mouche*, Mathilde said : " I never worried much about the matter ; only sometimes the idea occurred to me whether she might not

be a female spy." On the other hand, there is no want of evidence for the opposite view. Charlotte, Heine's sister, tells us of unsatisfactory relations between the two rivals. "Mouche," she says,¹ "visited my brother every day for a few hours, and his admiration for her unfortunately aroused in Mathilde a morbid degree of jealousy which finally degenerated into animosity. The wish of her husband that Mouche should occasionally partake of their midday meal Mathilde defiantly declined. She scarcely returned the visitor's friendly greeting and left the sick-room as soon as she entered." Probably the common-sense view to take of Mathilde's attitude is that she strongly disliked the visitor but found it convenient to let her take her place by the poet's bedside.

¹ Houben, *Gespräche*, p. 964.

XXVIII

HEINE THE MAN

HEINE enjoys the distinction of having been a literary storm-centre for over a hundred years, yet of all the questions the subject of Heine has given rise to, only one can be said to be definitely settled, that of the extraordinary importance of the man. The very duration of the controversy has demonstrated the fact that Heine is not a mere evanescent fad, the tickler of jaded palates of a couple of decades, but the "European event" which Nietzsche proclaimed him. In all other respects Heine remains as contentious a subject as ever: there has been no diminution of the interest he inspires nor of the irritation he causes. The attack of those he antagonizes is still aimed at the man, the poet and the thinker, and has lost little of its acrimony.

Probably the reproach most frequently levelled at Heine is that of want of character. It could be heard any day in his own time. It often meant no more than that the critic looked upon Heine as "immoral," using the word in the curiously restricted meaning it has assumed in English and German, that of pertaining to infractions of the code of sexual morality in word or deed. Apart from the question of personal conduct, the realism of some of his love songs might well give the readers of the idealistic love poets like Müller, Eichendorff and Geibel the impression of a deplorable looseness of morals which rendered all further discussion of the question of character unnecessary. It was more natural, and certainly more to the point, that the German radicals resident in Paris, who at one time had had good grounds for looking upon him as an ally, should conclude that he was "charakterlos" when he

informed them that their atmosphere of beer, cheese, tobacco and atheism had inspired him with an aversion to their politics. Heine looked upon the accusation, from whichever quarter it came, with equanimity, if not with amusement. When he calls that incarnation of unswerving political rectitude, Atta Troll, "kein Talent, doch ein Charakter," we feel that he is perfectly satisfied with being "ein Talent, doch kein Charakter." Indeed there have been few instances of such absolute indifference to reputation for character, no matter what the meaning of the word. He does not seem to be even remotely interested in concealing from his friends any act of his, no matter how discreditable, nor from the public any change of opinion, no matter how abrupt. His frankness is so amazing as to lend colour to the suspicion that he was bereft of all sense of shame. Without a blush he offers his pen to the disreputable Duke of Brunswick; for the sake of a professorship in Munich he is ready to tone down his political views. When his lifelong friend, Varnhagen, after the death of Rahel, collects the letters of the departed for biographical purposes, Heine regrets that Rahel's letters to him were destroyed by a Hamburg fire, whereas a year before that he had informed Campe that he had the most important of her letters with him in Paris and that he meant to make use of them himself.¹

To such instances of moral indifference biographers are in the habit of adding a long list of others which show that Heine was at war with himself and that he was a conglomerate of contradictions: that as a Jew he vilified Jews and Judaism; that Heine, the German, satirized Germany; that the radical poured contempt on radicalism, the aristocrat on aristocracy, and so on. From all this the conclusion is drawn that he is no better than a reed blown about by the wind and is entirely devoid of character. Psychologically speaking, this is of course nonsense. Every man has a character which

¹ Cf. Hirth, *Briefwechsel*: Heine's letter to Varnhagen of March 31, 1838 and that to Campe of May 3, 1837.

is the resultant of his innate disposition and his life-experience, including acquired habits. It manifests itself, as a rule, by a certain uniformity of conduct, enabling us to predict with some degree of certitude what the individual will do in any given circumstances. That the majority of men should have such constant and well-balanced characters is no doubt of importance to the community, but the possession of such a character is not necessarily a sign of mental superiority, as it is often found particularly marked in the unimaginative and the unimpressionable, that is to say, in the non-artistic. The character of the artist is of an entirely different type. The sensitive artist is, to a much greater extent than the ordinary man, dependent on and governed by impressions of the moment, and far more inclined to refer all things to himself and even to express the whole universe in terms of his own personality. Besides, the artist's impressions are often due to apparently very insignificant causes which, if they affected the ordinary man at all, would produce only very superficial and transitory effects. In the artist the impression due to these same insignificant causes may be not only exceedingly powerful but abnormally persistent. These traits of the artist's character are naturally not confined to the creative hours of his life, but manifest themselves in his everyday practical existence and bring about clashes with his non-artistic environment, to which he often finds it impossible to adjust himself. Our absurd haste to attach absolute ethical values to everything even remotely connected with character tends to cloud the issue and hampers the formation of a sound objective judgment. Egotism and impressionableness are qualities without which the artist, and consequently art, are unthinkable. We have to accept them as facts, along with whatever pleasant or unpleasant consequences may result from them.

Even among artists Heine represents one of the most extreme cases of egotism and impressionableness. As he was a pronounced neurasthenic from his earliest years,

his sensitiveness borders often on the pathological. His egotism does not, of course, preclude the possession of altruistic features such as family affection, notably his devotion to his mother, and friendship, though there were few friendships in his life that were not some time or other wrecked on the rock of his egotism. A case in point is his falling out with the best friend of his younger years, the devoted Moser, who had expressed disapproval of Heine's attack on Platen. Another instance is the war he declared on Meyerbeer because the latter had not sent him sufficiently good tickets for a first performance of one of his operas. The interaction of egotism and hypersensitiveness is here, as indeed throughout his life, perfectly obvious. In the case of the Meyerbeer incident the impression made on Heine is so strong that it swamps every other consideration, such as loyalty and gratitude for past favours, which would offset the painful impression in the case of ordinary individuals. The persistence of the impression is equally characteristic of Heine, and we have instances of such an impression becoming permanent when his poetic imagination or his wit take hold of it for creative purposes.

It is interesting to note that, in spite of his neurasthenia, his instincts were extraordinarily robust, that his strong erotic craving is that, not of the roué nor the degenerate, but of the natural, almost primitive, man, and that it persists until the very end, even after his body had ceased to count. To his vigorous instincts is due a touch of coarseness, as some would say, of realism according to others, in his portrayal of love. It would also explain how a woman like Mathilde could hold him so long, if we still required such an explanation after reading his letters to her, dictated as they are by his senses, not by his heart.

Heine's innate egotism was still further strengthened by the experience of his life and his environment. When, around 1800, the Jews left the ghetto which was a perfect hotbed of restraints, and the severely regulated community life that afforded little scope for the

expansion of the individual, they found the whole world outside the ghetto in a state of confusion and uncertainty, in bewildering contrast to the life they had left behind them, and ill-fitted to receive, let alone to absorb, the newcomers. The Revolution had destroyed a number of institutions, and along with them many of the traditions of the past which had hitherto acted as so many restraints on the self-assertion of the individual. What had taken their place was new, often crude, and at all events had not yet acquired the restraining force of a tradition. With the diminution of opportunities for united action and the removal of the spiritual and even physical protection of the ghetto, there arose for the Jews the need for self-assertion against their none too friendly surroundings. The self-assertive impulse was naturally stimulated by the inferiority complex from which no Jew was exempt, not even one who had done his best to become assimilated to his non-Jewish environment. Indeed, the latter's state was often more desperate as his inferiority was brought home to him by both Christians and Jews.

That Heine owed some of the vigour of his egotism to the strongly marked individualistic trait of the race from which he sprang, admits of little doubt, though it may be difficult to determine exactly to what extent he is a Jew in that respect, and still harder how much of his Jewishness is a matter of race and how much is due to environment.

Heine, so far from having no character, has really got a very strongly marked one. Hypersensitiveness and egotism are so powerful as to dominate him absolutely, and when these two come into play there is no attempt at controlling them, they are as elemental as the passions of Shakespearean heroes. In that respect his character is not a moral character in the fullest sense of the word, for that would imply self-control. We may go further and say that his hypersensitiveness and egotism are potentially anti-social qualities, though the same may be predicated of the artistic temperament in general, a

suspicion of which was lurking at the back of Plato's head when he proposed to eliminate the poet from his ideal state. What we are interested in, however, is the poet not as a citizen but as an artist, whose psychological prerequisites differ fundamentally from those which enable the ordinary man to give the world the best that is in him.

Hand in hand with his egotism went a fervent unshakable faith in himself and a will to live which borders on the incredible and culminates in the long-drawn-out heroic battle for life fought on his mattress-grave. With his wonderful brain unclouded and unimpaired to the last moment and a body reduced to a pathetic remnant, he could indeed say of himself :

Doch fall' ich unbesiegt, und meine Waffen
Sind nicht gebrochen—nur mein Herze brach.

According to popular opinion, Heine was essentially a pessimist. This is an error. By birth and disposition he was an optimist, a joyous lover of life who asked for nothing more than abundant opportunity to enjoy life. No true artist can, of course, be entirely blind to the saddening disparity of ideal and achievement, and so keen and frank a critic as Heine could not but suffer under the accumulation of artistic disillusionment which his work brought him. His optimism was further handicapped by the bitterness of the Jew's life, *der unheilbare Judenschmerz*, which the desertion to the Christian ranks did nothing to heal. But in spite of these and other impediments such as lamentable health, almost unceasing financial worries, and the unrelieved atmosphere of often unprovoked hostility in which he lived, the main current of his feelings is the reverse of pessimistic. If he does go through some depressing experience, his remarkable resilience will invariably enable him to recover himself.

Most of his principal works, *Harzreise*, *Nordseebilder*, *Buch Le Grand*, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, *Romantische Schule*, *Atta Troll*,

and the greater part of *Italien*, are extraordinarily cheerful literature. The exceptions are the *Traumbilder*, many individual poems of the remainder of the *Buch der Lieder*,¹ and the *Romanzero*. There was ample reason in the case of these exceptions to account for the state of depression: his unrequited love for Amalie in the former and his physical sufferings in the latter. In his numerous letters, too, which he did not write for publication, and where we may therefore assume he shows himself as he is and as he feels, he may manifest disappointment and even despondency in circumstances in which any other man would have experienced similar emotions. Apart from that, he is a cheerful and entertaining correspondent unless he writes of business matters, which he does frequently and then with becoming dryness.

His reputation for pessimism he owes in the first place to the *Traumbilder*, and the habit of melancholy he sedulously cultivated for a number of years during his residence in Hamburg and Berlin. In this he was a child of his time. His early years coincided with the period of florescence of the *Weltschmerz*, or universal pessimism. Chateaubriand's *René* had appeared in 1804, the first cantos of Byron's *Childe Harold* in 1812, Schopenhauer's *Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* in 1819, Leopardi's *Canzoni* in 1824, and long after Heine had cast off the sable garments of the *Weltschmerz* and wreathed his head with roses as the prophet of Saint Simonism, the movement was continued by Musset and Lenau, not to mention the lesser lights.

That this pessimism had an egotistic basis in most of these writers is certain, indeed few of them rose from the state of personal pessimism, a mere pseudo-*Weltschmerz*, to the phase of Leopardi's genuine universal pessimism with its insistence on the futility and uselessness of life, the predominance of pain over pleasure in this world, and the impossibility of finding a solution to the distressing riddle of the universe. To most of

¹ Cf. the most extreme expression of his pessimism in *Götterdämmerung*.

the pessimists of that time could be applied what Keiter says of Heine : " Because his heart was a sick-room, the whole world had to be a hospital." It is very doubtful whether, even on his mattress-grave, Heine ever soared to the tragic heights of universal pessimism, the *Weltschmerz* never really extended beyond his own personality. He will tell us that all human endeavour is futile, that the world is full of injustice and useless suffering, and that an appeal to Heaven only leads to further despair ; but he will also confess with charming *naïveté* that, provided he had good health and a little more money, he was prepared, by the side of Mathilde, to put up with this vale of tears for many years to come.

The Jews are on the whole not given to pessimism. Subjective races with a vigorous stubborn ego, whose main interests are centred in this world rather than the next, seem to be proof against the inroads of pessimism.¹ Heine is a striking instance of this. Besides, as he seemed rather to have an eye for the concrete and was not in any way an abstract thinker, his pessimism could not be based on philosophic considerations, it was of a purely personal type manifesting itself only as the effect of specific causes, the disappearance of which was followed by a return to his native optimism. Through a momentary impression his mind could be thrown into a despondent mood which would in most cases be overcome by a satirical reaction of his egotism. The impression was often a mere flash in the pan, but sufficient to become the *Erlebnis* and possibly to assume vast proportions. His contemporaries were often misled by what he had written, and surprised to find the author himself so pleasant and even jovial. When Schumann visited Heine in Munich he expected² to find " a peevish misanthrope looking upon himself as so far above men and life that he could not possibly adapt himself to them." Instead of that, Heine met

¹ A. Jellinek, *Der jüdische Stamm*, pp. 105, 106.

² Letter to Dr von Kurrer in F. Schnapp, *Heinrich Heine und Robert Schumann*, .

him in an amiable manner looking like a perfectly human Greek Anacreon, who shook hands with him in a friendly way and spent hours showing him the sights of Munich. He had not expected this of the author of the *Reisebilder*. The confession is somewhat naïve, and one wonders from what portions of the *Reisebilder* Schumann derived his impressions of Heine, but it is only one of a score of similar testimonies extending over all periods of his life, including the time of the Amalie episode.

When he migrates to Paris and is at last permitted to be just a German and no longer a German Jew, when he lives in a stimulating environment and enjoys the very modest degree of physical comfort which to many another would appear to be the irreducible minimum, we hear nothing more of pessimism for a number of years until the final physical break-up begins. Even then, whenever his body is not actually convulsed with pain, this pitiable wreck, a mere bundle of aching nerves, eagerly snatched at every crumb of enjoyment life doled out to him. Although he is condemned to live for years in dull, uninteresting surroundings where, on account of his sensitive nerves, every sound is muffled and every light is dimmed, and although paralysis has reduced him to a brain, a hand and lips which move with difficulty only, the "moribond spirituel" entertains his often tearful and depressing visitors with his cheerful conversation.

Heine was an incredible incarnation of unconquerable optimistic egotism.

XXIX

HEINE THE POET

THE estimate of Heine, the poet, varies according to the strength of the personal appeal made to the critic. Some maintain that he has written barely a dozen genuine poems, that the remainder bear the stamp of arbitrariness and insincerity; these critics consequently place him below Uhland and Platen. Others compare him to Goethe and would have him follow Goethe immediately, while a few, carried away by racial predilections that are really foreign to sane literary criticism, proclaim Heine to be the greatest lyric poet of Germany, if not of the world. All such attempts to rank poets according to merit are of course futile, and, though it may be instructive to bring out the characteristics of different poets by comparison, no one has fortunately succeeded yet in standardizing these characteristics as we standardize wool or cheese. Every great poetic personality is *sui generis* and therefore incomparable. The only test of greatness is the continuance of the appeal made by the poet to successive generations. That Heine has attained to this degree of greatness must be obvious to anyone who can appreciate the meaning of a whole century that has elapsed since Heine first made his appeal.

If Heine's poetic reputation has encountered difficulties in establishing itself, this is due to some extent to his juxtaposition with Goethe. The latter has assured the world that all his works were merely the fragments of a great confession. Thereby he appeared to set up a standard of poetic sincerity which was not in the same way applicable to the works of other poets. Goethe commentators, whose ambition has been

to bring to light the biographical substratum of every stanza of Goethe's poems, have made other poets in whose case this was impossible appear as mere romancers and bluffers. Heine, as the contemporary and immediate successor of Goethe, was particularly exposed to this danger, and a great deal of his poetry was called, and is still called, insincere. This arises out of a misunderstanding of the nature and process of poetic production, and particularly of the meaning and function of *Erlebnis*. When we are told that Goethe's *An den Mond* is based on three incidents of Goethe's life: the suicide of a lady of the Court, a reconciliation with Frau von Stein and the visit of a misanthropic friend, we are duly interested, and though the information does not add to our enjoyment of the poem, we admire the genius of the poet who has welded the moods occasioned by these events into an artistic whole; yet the important thing to us even in the case of Goethe is not the outward event, say the suicide of Christiane von Lassberg, but the inward result, the mood, which is the real poetic *Erlebnis*. No one has ever doubted the sincerity of that poem as the expression of the poet's emotion, even without knowing what the emotion was due to in the first place. What really carries conviction is not the historical documentation of the origin of the emotion, but the fact that the poet's emotion evokes a similar emotion in the reader's mind. Nevertheless, many readers of Goethe seem to derive particular comfort from the conviction that in the background of every one of Goethe's poems there lurks some interesting fact of his life, discreetly veiled as in *An den Mond*, or clearly brought out as in *Es schlug mein Herz*.

In the extraordinarily sensitive Heine, on the other hand, the outward event is so insignificant as to be negligible, and even the Amalie episode is uninteresting until we know how it affected the psychic peculiarities of Heine. Contrary to our experience with Goethe, where a biographical fact often explains a poem, in Heine the poem serves rather as a commentary of the

biography. Indeed, what is true of most poets is particularly true of Heine: the further he gets away from the outer *Erlebnis* the greater he becomes as an artist. In *An Jenny* he tells us the whole story of his love with an abundance of detail down to the very date when he met Amalie, including considerable embellishments of the facts. The hopelessness of his yearning for Amalie is the emotional theme of the poem, but how far more impressively the mood of hopeless yearning is expressed by that perfect lyric, *Fichtenbaum und Palme*, in which the artist was no longer weighed down by the details of the outward *Erlebnis* and his imagination, was free to sensualize the mood in whatever way it listed.

As remarkable as the sensitiveness of Heine is the variety of moods which one and the same trifling event may give rise to. His love for Amalie seems to make every nerve tingle and to stir the whole of his emotional fabric. This simplest of love adventures arouses love and hatred, bliss and despair, rapture and grief, jealousy and resignation. The wonder is how out of this medley of emotions, out of this chaos of conflicting feelings, Heine should have been able to create perfect works of art at all. This is all the stranger as he rarely rises above his impressions and is rather overwhelmed by his cataclysmic emotions. He is far from being the absolute master of his material that Goethe was, nor does he possess the latter's self-control, his balance and harmony. We do not necessarily regret this, for we cannot help realizing that Goethe's self-control, the mastery over his feelings, his classic calm, often land him—and us—especially in his later works, in chilly dullness.

Heine's emotions constitute his *Erlebnis*. That they are often contradictory is no proof of their insincerity, for the association of contraries is a common psychological phenomenon. Often they do not correspond directly to anything in his outward experience, but his rage at the faithlessness of his beloved and at her betrayal

of him are just as real as any emotions directly evoked by the outward *Erlebnis* could be. His story of her faithlessness is suggested by his jealousy, and is a graphic sensualization of that feeling. The reproach that his often idealized pictures of his love are contradicted by the grosser actual experiences of his life among the nymphs of the red light district in Hamburg or the *Passage des Panoramas* in Paris is irrelevant. When Schumann says: "I do not like the poet whose life does not harmonize with his works," this, though it may be justifiable as a criticism of the man, cannot be applied to the artist, for the essential fact in the artist's work is not moral character, but mood. It is quite possible for a despicably immoral man to be a great artist. As long as we speak of art, all reference to the moral character of the artist is beside the question.

Heine is the man of the moment, he lives in the moment and by moments, there is no before and no after for him, the impression of the moment holds him enthralled. There was good reason for arranging his poems in cycles. Not only does each individual poem profit by poems preceding or following, but the reader is spared the shock of the apparent glaring inconsistency which would be inevitable if the poet's impressions were offered in the order in which they really occurred. Owing to this peculiarity of living in the moment and the concentration of his whole being on the moment, Heine shows no sense of perspective when he attempts poems of more ambitious size, and he soon tires of the task when he undertakes it. It also follows that for such a man it would be difficult to have convictions in the ordinary sense of the word, for such convictions would be governed by his moods, which are ever changing.

It is interesting to see what could be the attitude of such a personality to the outside world as represented by nature.¹ Schelling's dictum that the laws of the

¹ This has been very fully treated by A. Pache, *Naturgefühl und Natursymbolik bei Heine*.

functions of the human mind are also found in nature, and her physical, chemical and physiological processes seemed to supply the philosophic sanction for the animation of nature so characteristic of the Romanticists and along with Fichte's teaching about the Ego, led to a fusion—or perhaps rather confusion—of subject and object, which ended in sheer mysticism. Heine expresses this romantic idea most charmingly in the *Harzreise* :

“How rapturous is the feeling when the phenomenal world fuses with our inner world, and green trees, ideas, the singing of birds, melancholy, the blue of the sky, memories and the fragrance of herbs become entwined in lovely arabesques. Women know this feeling best, and that is why such a charming incredulous smile flits over their lips when in our scholastic pride we boast of our logical exploits, how we have classified everything so nicely into objective and subjective, how our heads are furnished like druggists' shops with a thousand drawers, one of which contains reason, the other understanding, the third wit, the fourth poor jokes and the fifth nothing at all, that is to say, the idea.”

The last thing Heine could really be for long is a mystic, his sanity and the extraordinary clearness with which he sees the objective world will invariably react against any attempt at mysticism. A very striking instance is the ironical reaction in the second part against the mysticism of the first part of *Friede* in the *Nordseebilder*. In his earliest cycle, *Junge Leiden*, he is hardly aware of the existence of nature, being far too absorbed by his inner world. In the *Intermezzo* he follows the literary fashion of the time and expects nature to feel in unison with every one of his moods, especially his sadder moods : the roses are pale, the violets dumb, the lark is sad, the sun is cold, because his beloved is faithless. But he is already freeing himself from the romantic influence, his sanity is asserting itself, and nature becomes a mere appropriate stage-setting when he tells us that his love was born in spring and that drear and chilly autumn saw the end of his dream. There is no longer any suggestion in these poems of a sympathetic

attitude of nature towards the poet. He may continue to animate nature from time to time, letting violets giggle and roses tell each other fragrant fairy tales, but a sane realism, as in *Dämmernd liegt der Sommerabend*, is taking the place of the romantic conceit which dreamt of dominating nature. When, at last, he beholds the overwhelming grandeur of the sea, his soul-mate in inconstancy and ever-changing moods, we have heard the last of the presumptuous idea of the domination of nature by man. He may sometimes return to the romantic technique which by itself produces an impression of artificiality, or he may deliberately choose to dream the romantic dream all over again, but the naïve enjoyment of the dream is no longer possible, and the poet must feel like the knight of whom he writes in *Die Nixen*. He lies on the ground with his eyes closed, and nymphs, thinking him asleep, dance about him and kiss him on cheeks and lips : but he refrains from opening his eyes :

Der Ritter ist klug, es fällt ihm nicht ein,
Die Augen öffnen zu müssen ;
Er lässt sich ruhig im Mondenschein
Von schönen Nixen küssen.

The question whether Heine is to be considered a German poet or a Jewish poet is still discussed with a certain amount of heat. We may at once dismiss critics of obviously anti-Semitic leanings who tell us that Heine is un-German and Oriental, a forger of literary base coin, and that his fame is founded mainly on encomiums of Jewish origin. It is inconceivable that Jewish praise could for a whole century have fooled Heine's German readers, and have persuaded them to feel his appeal to their German hearts, when in reality there was no such appeal. The claim that Heine is a Jewish poet proceeds, however, mainly from the Jews themselves ; that Heine appeals to them particularly as Jews is interesting and merits attention. But is it the Jewish poet that appeals to them or merely the poet

who is a Jew? The burden of proof lies on their shoulders, for the presumption in favour of a purely German poet Heine is not only very natural but particularly strong. To most people it seems an axiomatic statement that a poet who thinks and writes exclusively in German is a German poet. The French never think of claiming Chamisso as a French poet, though he was born in France of French parents and spent the early years of his life there. Most of the reasons given to prove that Heine is a Jewish poet may demonstrate the fact that he was of Jewish descent, but that does not make him a Jewish poet. Unfortunately our material for determining what really goes to make a Jewish poet is far from ample. When we have mentioned the names of Isaiah and Jehuda ben Halevy, and perhaps the modern Bialik, we have pretty well exhausted the list of Jewish poets whose cultural background is Jewish. A comparison of Heine with these would give us very meagre results. We experience no difficulty in determining the ever-present French elements in the poetry of Victor Hugo and Alfred de Musset or the German element in Goethe, but where are the Jewish elements in Heine's poetry? We are referred to the Oriental colouring of some of his verse, yet we find this exotic character far more strongly marked in such poets as Freiligrath, and overwhelmingly so in Victor Hugo, Musset, Moore, who are not Jews. This Oriental colouring is in any case often only a matter not of mood, but of the choice of words. *Auf Flügeln des Gesanges*, often quoted as an example of Oriental imagery, is essentially a German song. Some of the stanzas can easily be divested of their Oriental trappings by altering a single word, for instance, substituting *Lindenbaum* for *Palmenbaum*, *Nachtwiolen* for *Lotosblumen*. It will be admitted, on the other hand, that Heine accomplishes great things by means of a few Oriental splashes in the picture, but that is mere technique. On the whole his language is far from Oriental, it is chaste and simple rather than exuberant, and very few of his lines can be

compared in point of dazzling brilliancy with the verse of Lamartine or Victor Hugo, who are in that respect far more Oriental than Heine. With the exception of a few excursions into Oriental imagery, his language is German to the core, and so are, on the whole, his feelings. If we find him, and that very rarely, in what appears to be a Jewish mood, as in the magnificent *Brich aus in lauten Klagen*, we must remember that Heine is also the author of the Catholic *Wallfahrt nach Kevlaar* and the intrinsically Christian poem entitled *Friede*, of the *Nordseebilder*. No mood was beyond his reach. The time when he first planned his *Rabbi von Bacharach* was probably the only period of his life when he evinced a desire to be considered a Jewish poet, and the failure of the work suggests that he may have discovered his own Jewish cultural background to be too thin to render his task possible. By the time he wrote :

Ich bin ein deutscher Dichter,
Bekannt im deutschen Land ;
Nennt man die besten Namen,
So wird auch der meine genannt—

he had realized that his poetry drew its best nourishment from the soil of European culture and that occidental feeling and thought were the fundamental conditions of its development.¹

¹ C. Pützfeld, *Heines Verhältnis zur Religion*, p. 39.

XXX

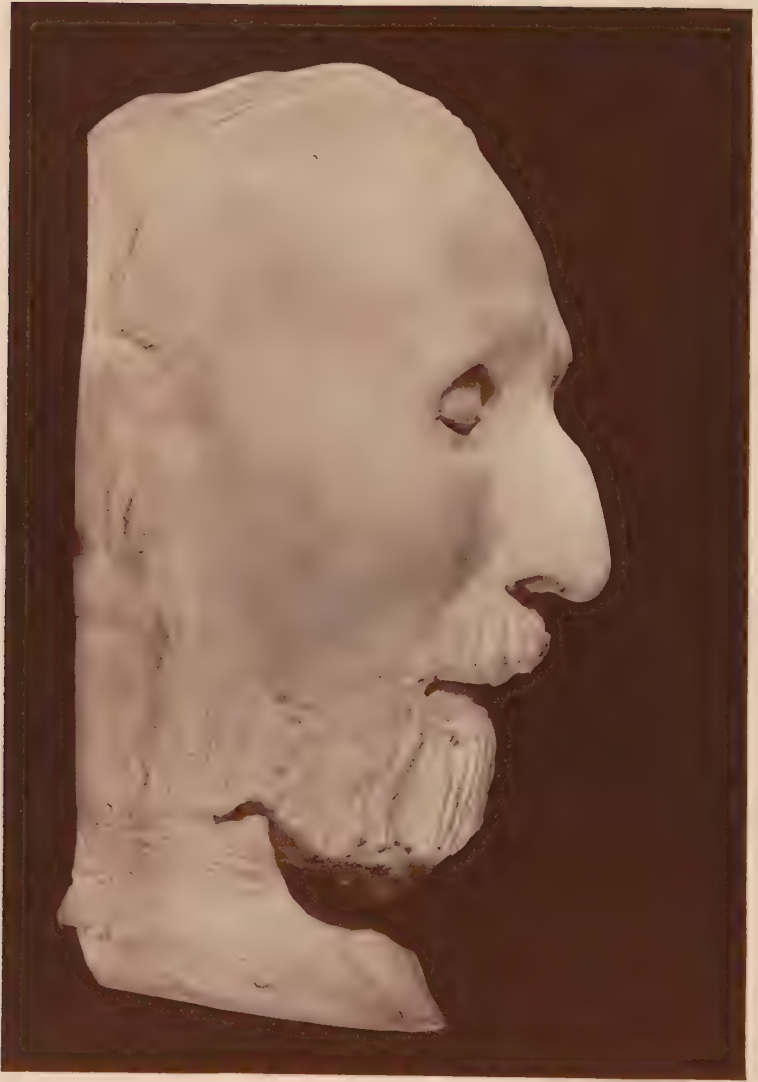
HEINE AND POLITICS

ONE of the most astonishing features of the perennial interest excited by Heine is that even as a political writer he is continuing to receive attention at the hands of serious investigators.¹ If we compare Börne and Heine as politicians, and especially as political leaders, no one would hesitate to award the palm to Börne. Yet Börne is almost forgotten, while Heine has remained astonishingly modern. Whether his importance to us is due to his politics or only to his political satire, is a question the answer to which depends largely on the political standpoint of the reader.

Most people only know Heine as a radical, a thorn in the flesh of the reactionary governments of Europe, a man of very unstable convictions and given to the sport of hunting with the hounds one day and running with the hares the next. By liberals he is revered as one of the early protagonists of liberalism, by conservatives detested and reviled as a shameless, unscrupulous, unpatriotic demagogue. The story of his political evolution is interesting. In the days of his youth he was as naïve, full-mouthed, and stagey a German patriot as could be found anywhere in the fatherland. A poem of that time, *Deutschlands Ruhm will ich besingen*, which has already been referred to, is a perfect model of the average patriotic effusion of the time both in language and narrowness of outlook. We have no evidence of any worship of Napoleon nor of a more critical attitude with regard to Germany until he reached his twenty-

¹ Dr G. Ras, *Börne und Heine als politische Schriftsteller*; Margaret A. Clarke, *Heine et la Monarchie de Juillet*, were published as recently as last year.

second year, when he composed *Die Grenadiere*. By that time the Rhineland had been under Prussian rule for four years, and the discontent with the new régime was becoming more and more marked. Though the Prussian administration was really superior to the French in many respects, the nagging petty Prussian despotism was felt to be far more unbearable than the colossal Napoleonic tyranny of the past, which legend was already surrounding with a rosy halo. This critical attitude, which has been so often characterized as unpatriotic, was general all along the Rhine, and by no means confined to Heine and his co-religionists. The patriotic dream of *Deutschlands Ruhm will ich besingen* is giving way to the profound discouragement of *Sohn der Torheit, träume immer*, written, probably at Bonn, in 1819. When the poet now looks down upon Germany from the top of a hill he sees a people of dwarfs crawling over the graves of giants, and the only fruit of victory is a chain which weighs down the neck of the fatherland. It is by no means improbable that his enthusiasm for Napoleon dates mainly from that time. He still, however, joins the Burschenschaft in Göttingen, though there is nothing to show to what extent he was really in sympathy with its patriotic idealism or even interested in it. The expulsion from the Burschenschaft is important in as much as it meant not only a breach with the members of that society but, by a truly Heinesque repercussion, with the ideals of the Burschenschaft as well. He never could separate the man from his political opinions. It is the beginning of a period of indifference in political matters, an indifference which again requires a strong personal motive to be replaced by an acrimonious critical attitude towards everything German. This motive is supplied by the painful collision of the Jew with the rigid Prussian regulations excluding Jews from the only professions Heine was at all qualified to enter, the legal and the academic. In other words, the law prevented him from earning his living, and compelled him in the end to



DEATH MASK

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carry out the humiliating retreat to the Christian ranks, which only resulted in further bitterness. As to a man of Heine's vigorous instincts poverty was nothing short of disastrous, the attitude of the government left him no choice.

His difficulties were still further increased by the fact that he was essentially an aristocratic egotist. His extreme egotism was fraught with danger in a state where, since the time of the great Prince Elector, the individual's worth was measured, not by the vehemence of his urge to assert himself, but by his usefulness to the state. Now Heine was bound to assert himself wherever his own interests were concerned, and the reaction of his egotism to any state interference was both instantaneous and violent. That in his opposition to Prussia there seemed to be only one possible ally, democracy, was again unfortunate, for democracy is the worst enemy of self-assertive personalities, and the unnatural alliance between it and the profoundly aristocratic Heine was bound to lead to serious conflict. As long as he was in Germany he went along smoothly enough, and his political sarcasm gained him many friends and admirers. Fortunately for him he was not expected to formulate any definite liberal policy, he was not meant to do anything, merely to say things, and say them well, and the vaguest generalities seemed to satisfy everybody. Two medieval institutions, the clergy and the aristocracy, proved a seemingly inexhaustible source of material on which to exercise his wit. They were plainly the most shocking examples of political, social, and religious inequality, which was at the bottom of the whole of Heine's troubles. But whether equality was to be achieved ultimately under a king or a republic did not seem of much importance, his own aristocratic preference was royalist rather than republican. If in some of his dithyrambic outbursts he joins liberty and equality with republicanism, this is merely a matter of conventional historical association, and when he speaks ill of kings he has invariably a strong

personal motive for doing so, as in the case of Ludwig of Bavaria, of Frederick William III and his successor. Börne was prepared to behead every king without exception, as a matter of principle, Heine had a personal quarrel with a few only, he scolds them, admonishes them to repent and reform. If they prove recalcitrant, as they invariably do, he still shrinks from regicide, he flays them alive. Judging by his preface to the *Französische Zustände*, decapitation would have been more humane.

So far as the abolition of inequality was concerned his cause was evidently that of the people. All the same, the cause he had espoused was in the first place his own, and its identity with that of the people was purely accidental. He may therefore turn his back on the people without proving disloyal to his principle. Doubts must have arisen among his democratic allies during his last years in Germany as to the soundness of Heine's liberalism, and rumours reached Heine which made him write to his friend Wienbarg: "If a revolution breaks out in Germany, mine will not be the last head to fall."

When in Paris he meets the unprepossessing German republicans at their public meetings and in their cafés, when he realizes that these are the men who are planning to seize the reins of power, that, not content with achieving equality, the only thing he personally cares about, they are aiming at a general upheaval in which "their horny hands will mercilessly break all the marble statues of beauty, tear up the laurel groves and plant potatoes in their place," his essentially aristocratic nature revolts. Does he still need his democratic allies anyhow? He lives in a country where equality reigns, where the aristocracy plays a secondary part, and the clergy none at all. His environment is pleasant and stimulating, he has the inspiration of his new Saint-Simonian religion, and his income allows him a certain ease and comfort of living. About the middle of May 1832, he wrote to Varnhagen that he is now living at

peace with things as they are, and that if he does not disarm completely, this is owing to the German radicals, the enemies of all moderation. He would have liked nothing better than to have shaken off the German radicals, but they refused to be shaken off, they could ill afford to lose a Heine. Unfortunately, too, reactionary Germany, dominated by Austria, would not allow Heine to live in peace, and missed no opportunity to drive him back into the republican camp. Soon after his arrival in Paris he had begun to contribute his articles on French politics to the *Allgemeine Zeitung*. They had little enough connection with German affairs, but because Heine's criticism of Louis Philippe does not fit in with Metternich's general monarchical principles, Cotta, the editor, was told to put a stop to the appearance of further contributions from the pen of Heine, the *verruchte Abenteurer*. A few years later the Bundestag forbade the sale and circulation of all his works. His position between the two extreme parties was desperate. As the result there arose the necessity of continual irritating and often humiliating compromises, on the one hand, between his aristocratic disposition and his unpleasant, uncongenial radical allies, and on the other between his very simple liberal faith and the reactionary government of Germany. He was by no means wanting in physical courage, but he feared the worst at the hands of the German extremists, and, again, as he was not naturalized in France, he dreaded extradition, which might come any day at the request of the Prussian authorities. It was obviously impossible for Heine to be at one with himself in the circumstances.

Heine has often been accused of being in the pay of this or that government or party. The German republicans resident in Paris with Börne at their head were particularly reckless and persistent in making the charge, as the most effective return they could devise for Heine's apostasy, the most convincing explanation of it. It was more especially suggested that he was in the pay of Metternich, "the diplomatic poisoner," as Heine

calls him in the *Geständnisse*. So far no proof has been furnished for a statement which lacks *prima facie* probability in view of Metternich's unremitting persecution of Young Germany, including Heine. A recently published attempt to prove the charge¹ fails to settle the question in the affirmative, by a series of mere suppositions, a string of "si" and "peut-être," and such inconclusive evidence as "that eleven years after Heine's death his widow offered Heine's unpublished literary remains for sale to the Austrian government," who refused to acquire it. Nobody knows exactly what these papers contained; but there was not likely to be anything to the discredit of Mathilde's husband, but rather to that of Austria, who was thus given an opportunity of preventing the publication of the papers. A similar offer of the *Nachlass* two years later to Prussia was also refused.² Was the author of the Preface to the *Französische Zustände* in the pay of Prussia as well?

Altogether too much stress has been laid on what is called his political fickleness. A great deal of the occasional sudden watering of his liberalism, or the distribution of compliments in unexpected political quarters, is due to the necessity of conciliating the all-powerful censor from whose discretion or indiscretion there was no appeal, or appeasing the numerous conservatives among the readers of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, the German paper which had the greatest circulation, and was therefore the most useful for spreading his views; or too serious a clash between his opinions and the declared policy of the journal for which he was writing had to be avoided at all costs. As Heine told a friend, even in the country in which there is no government interference with the Press the editor's plea, "cela n'entre pas dans l'idée de notre journal," constitutes a limitation of the freedom of thought and speech. There may be

¹ M. A. Clarke, *Heine et la Monarchie de Juillet*.

² For the Austrian and Prussian letters, see Heine-Geldern und Karpeles, *Heine-Reliquien*, x. p. 321. The story of the negotiations with Austria, Prussia, and Napoleon III is given by Dr R. Stritzko in *Österreichischer Rundschau*, Bd. 44, Heft ii., supplemented by Dr F. Hirth in Heft iii.

some grain of truth, too, in the statement that when Heine had just formulated a political opinion, but found that the assertion of the contrary gave a finer cadence, he would without hesitation prefer the sentence with the finer cadence. This far too sweeping statement is true in so far as it emphasizes the fact, too often forgotten, that Heine is a poet first and last, and that the most important thing with any true artist is not the substance but the form, not what he expresses, but how he gives it to the world. Heine has, however, moments when he feels the irresistible urge to settle some long overdue reckoning with his enemies. He then throws compromise and diplomacy to the winds and knows nothing of consideration for readers, censors, editors, or personal safety. There is then no playing with cadences: he writes out of the fulness of his heart, in the midst of his anger he displays a remarkable clearness of political vision, and he settles the reckoning in a prose that has never been rivalled in political literature. "He was always not only sincerest, but wittiest, when he was angry." It is on these occasions that we see him as the brilliant and fearless champion of liberty, his own, it is true, in the first place, and yet the liberty of mankind, unknown to the Prussia of that time and surpassing by far the very wooden and mechanical conception of the German republicans.

Heine has no constructive policy to offer, perhaps just because he had a much deeper insight into the complexities of life, the realities of the political situation, a finer historic sense, and a deeper appreciation of the paramount importance of the social question over the political than that simple soul, Börne, who, in the language of the *Moniteur* of 1793, offers his republican panacea to a Germany far from ripe for a republic, and clamours for a revolution which in the circumstances could at best set up one tyranny for another.

Because he saw things so clearly, because no inanity, no contradiction, no absurdity, ever escaped him, he found it impossible to belong to any party and felt

impelled to satirize them all. But when he says, "I do not belong to any party except perhaps my own," he was not insensible to the great inspirations of both the radical and the nationalist. There is no more scathing denunciation of the misery and the unspeakable sufferings of a downtrodden proletariat than *Die Weber*, nor does any verse of the time approach in patriotic virility and fervour Heine's poem beginning :

Deutschland ist noch ein kleines Kind,
Doch die Sonne ist seine Amme,
Sie säugt es nicht mit stiller Milch,
Sie säugt es mit wilder Flamme.

Heine was not a patriot in the vulgar sense of the word. "My country right or wrong," would have called forth his choicest sarcasms. All drumming and trumpeting, all shouting and flag-waving and over-stressing of the importance of one's own country seemed to him unspeakably absurd. This "most German beast," as he called himself, undoubtedly loved his fatherland, to which, as he deeply realized, he owed his most precious possessions, his language and his culture ; and he would rather have lived there than anywhere else if such a thing had appeared to him financially possible and politically safe. Unfortunately his country did not want him : he could neither earn his living there nor enjoy a reasonable degree of freedom from annoyance and anxiety.

It is true he went into voluntary exile in 1831, and Treitschke seeks to prove that it continued to be voluntary.¹ His trump cards are that in answer to Guizot's inquiry relative to Heine's proposed French naturalization in 1843, the German Minister for Home Affairs assured the French Government that "aucune mesure de police n'a jamais été prise contre sa personne," and, secondly, that in 1844, when Heine visited Hamburg, he was able to return through Prussian territory without

¹ Treitschke, *Geschichte Deutschlands im 19ten Jahrhundert*, Appendix to vol. v.

being molested by the authorities. That this would no longer have been possible after 1844, Treitschke admits. In explanation of Heine's freedom to visit Germany in 1844 it should be mentioned that on the occasion of the accession to the throne of Frederick William IV in 1840 a general amnesty had been granted political offenders. Before that date the author of the Preface to the *Französische Zustände* was not likely to be safer from police interference than the patriotic poet, Arndt, who was professor of history until 1820, when criminal proceedings were taken against him for daring to speak and write in favour of representative institutions, and who was debarred from lecturing for a period of twenty years. There was the warning example of Jahn, a loyalist of the deepest dye, who, on the mere suspicion of being a demagogue, was condemned to two years imprisonment, and was practically a ticket-of-leave man for years after. There was the unpleasant experience of Behr, an ex-mayor of Würzburg, who, because he had written a pamphlet asking for a revision of the constitution, was condemned to kneel in front of the portrait of the King of Bavaria, asking for forgiveness, and was thereafter kept in prison "during His Majesty's pleasure," which proved less ephemeral than His Majesty's other diversions, for Behr was not released until 1848. It will be readily understood that the bon-vivant Heine did not care to run the risk of becoming acquainted with the menu of Prussian prisons, and preferred to prolong his "voluntary" exile in more congenial surroundings.

Is it surprising that his keen vision for the stupidly archaic, the incongruous, and the useless, combined with his remarkable power of correlating the apparently unrelated, should sometimes give us diatribes against Germany, rendered cynical by the irritating consciousness of his impotence to bring about even the slightest change for the better? The situation was so desperate, the reactionary régime seemed so firmly established, the people so submissive and poor-spirited, that he had no

hope for Germany, and there were times when "everything German acted on him like an emetic." As Freud¹ puts it: "The events of Heine's time did not merely provoke joking, they were jokes in themselves."

Politically Germany meant Metternich, and there was no arguing with the Metternich régime. The only way to get under the skin of German-Austrian despotism was to insult it grossly and cruelly, and to make it appear so foolish in the eyes of all thoughtful men that history was likely to remember it as the acme of obtuseness. This Heine could do to perfection; this was his function in the war of the liberation of mankind. It was thus he contributed enormously, probably more than any other writer of his time, to the political awakening of Germany and the stimulation of the desire for liberty.

¹ Freud, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten*.



DEATH MASK

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XXXI

HEINE'S WIT

HEINE can hardly be blamed for using the weapon nature had placed in his hand, his wit, which he could wield with such deadly effect to ward off the innumerable political, racial, religious, and personal attacks to which he was exposed all his life. "What sustains me," he says, "is the pride of my mental superiority which I received at birth, and the consciousness that no man in the world can with fewer strokes of the pen avenge himself more effectively." That the number of his enemies would be enormously increased by the delight he took in provoking fresh attacks is only to be expected. It is also natural that his victims, their partisans, and all who had an uneasy feeling that the cap fitted them, should say and write much in depreciation of his wit. He has been called a mere buffoon, who with his wit covers up the paucity of his ideas by dressing them up in different suits of motley. Such a charge springs from a misunderstanding regarding the relative importance of the material of the artist and his treatment of it. That his political ideas, for instance, are few in number, will be generally admitted, but surely the impression of variety he produces with his very simple material should rather be set down to his credit.

It has also been said that the effectiveness of his wit is owing largely to the fact that he is firing buckshot all the time, which, spreading in a circle, is bound to hit something. This is far from true. He rarely fires at random, the wonder is rather that he should so often aim at an infinitesimally small target and work such destruction. The flatness of an enemy's nose is as

likely as not to be the point of attack, or he may attach the truly Heinesque epithet "übelriechend" to a man's smile and build up such a superstructure of witty innuendo on this slender basis as to render the victim unfit for decent society.

One of the reasons why he hits the target so often is that he is not a mere jester, but is generally in dead earnest. His wit is rarely arbitrary, like that of the romanticist, whimsical like that of Jean Paul, nor does it become a nauseating, bad habit, an obsession, as with Saphir, "a mere sneeze of the intelligence." "Wit," says Heine, "is bearable only when it rests on a serious background." His wit is as intensely subjective as his poetry, and the urge to express it and communicate it is irresistible. Something similar may be predicated of wit in general, but it is pre-eminently true in the case of Heine. "If a crown were at stake," says Börne, "he would be unable to suppress a smile, a scoffing remark, or a witty sally." Often his wit is the reaction to the distress and pain he endured or to the Jewish inferiority complex, and then again by a flash as deadly and as final as Jove's thunderbolt he passes judgment on things and persons, a judgment having the force and value of a logical conclusion, though all the intermediate steps of the reasoning are omitted.

In accordance with its very nature wit manifests itself in the form of an apparently detached, suddenly occurring, idea belonging to an entirely different order of ideas from what has immediately preceded. True wit establishes the relationship between the two orders or, as Jean Paul says, unites in matrimony two individuals to whose union all the relatives are vehemently opposed. The artist's conscious function—for the origin of wit is due to an unconscious process—is the setting he gives to the witty idea. In this Heine shows himself a supreme artist. In the ninth chapter of the *Buch Le Grand* he hurls his maledictions against all the enemies of the great Napoleon, particularly England, which he charges with having murdered the man of the people.

As mere literature it is a magnificent passage, and the reader, overlooking the bad history and, we hope, worse prophecy, is carried away by its perfervid eloquence. Then comes the reflection: "Strange! The three greatest adversaries of the emperor have already been overwhelmed by a terrible fate: Londonderry has cut his own throat, Louis XVIII has rotted away on his throne, and Professor Sahlfeld is still professor at Göttingen." The example is particularly interesting, as with one and the same shot Heine manages to hit two targets, the "Franzosenfresser" Sahlfeld and the University of Göttingen.

Heine had said of Sir Walter Scott that he was like a millionaire whose capital consisted entirely in small change. Eckertz, in an otherwise admirable study,¹ applies this saying to Heine's wit, as if Heine's writings were merely scintillating with individual flashes. They are, on the contrary, full of little masterpieces in which the individual sally is subordinated to a definite artistic plan. We have witty thumbnail sketches like the portraits of Madame Pieper and Madame Schnieper.² "She was a handsome woman in her ripest years; big dark eyes, a large white forehead, false black curls, a bold old-Roman nose, and a mouth which was a guillotine for every good reputation. Indeed for a good name there was no handier engine of execution than Madame Pieper's jaw. She would not allow the victim to struggle long, she required no long-drawn-out preparations, once the best of good names had got between her teeth, she just smiled—but that smile was the knife of the guillotine, honour was cut off and fell into the sack. She was a model of propriety, honourableness, piety, and virtue. The same could be said to the credit of Madame Schnieper. She was a delicate woman, she had timorous little breasts generally covered with a piece of melancholy gauze, fair hair, light blue eyes, the frightful shrewdness of which shot like a stab out of her

¹ E. Eckertz, *Heine und sein Witz*.

² *Memoiren des Herrn von Schnabelewopski*.

white face. People said that no one could ever hear her step, and indeed she would quite unexpectedly stand beside you and then disappear without a sound. Her smile was just as deadly for any good reputation, but it was less like an axe than like the African poison wind which makes all flowers fade. Any good name over which her smile hovered ever so lightly had to wilt miserably. She was always a model of propriety, honourableness, piety, and virtue." Besides, we have the delightful figures of Gumpelino and Hyacinth, and the portraits of Platen, Börne, Pfizer, Menzel, and Massmann, who are likely to go down to posterity, not as they were in the flesh, but as Heine's wit recreated them. We may be told a thousand times that Börne was not quite so wooden-headed as Heine paints him, that Pfizer was in reality not entirely without poetic talent, that Massmann was a very harmless and erudite person, and that Menzel's merits considerably outweigh his unpleasant qualities. Heine's portraits will always make a deeper and more lasting impression than portraits based on the actual facts.

There was nothing abstract about his wit, indeed a great many of his wittiest sallies owe at least a portion of their success to their actuality, to the fact that they are concerned with contemporary persons and institutions, and they probably appeared even more brutally concrete at the time than they do now. To the victims his incredible want of consideration and even ordinary delicacy must have seemed unredeemed by the brilliance of the attack, they would certainly be the last to appreciate the often exquisite skill he lavished on them to endow them with an unpleasant immortality. What Heine says of Lessing's wit applies to some extent to his own. According to him Lessing's wit was not a little French greyhound chasing after its own shadow, but a huge German tom-cat which plays with the mouse before strangling it. In addition to the protracted nature of the torture there was always with Heine the probability of a resuscitation of the victim for the pur-

pose of further sport, some of the unfortunates being executed three or four times. When asked by Kalisch¹ why he was so incessantly pouring out his satire over the unfortunate Massmann, he replied: "Good heavens! I am an old man. It is too late to get new fools. I must live by the old ones. Massmann is a lucrative fool, he is my annuity." The reply is, of course, to be taken as purely facetious, proving once more that his wit could not leave Massmann alone.

The truth is that just as his disappointment in love became the obsession of his lyric mood, the victims of his riper years exercised an irresistible fascination over the poet with whom combativeness had become second nature. That a great deal of the acerbity of his wit is to be set down to the irritable condition caused by his sufferings is rendered probable by a comparison of the deadly satire of his later writings with the gentle and often good-natured jesting of the *Harzreise*, the *Nordsee*, and large portions of the works composed during his first years in Paris. In his early years even his sarcasm is occasionally almost tinged with charitableness. Heine at the time strongly disliked his co-religionists, and few writers have said more mercilessly scathing things about them, yet he manages to render the fundamentally sarcastic portraits of Gumpelino and Hirsch Hyacinth eminently sympathetic, especially the latter. Hirsch Hyacinth, at one time a dealer in lottery tickets, is made to tell the story how, when he was commissioned by his friend Klotz to buy a ticket with a particular number it turned out to be a winner of 50,000 marks. He hands the sum to his customer and gets him to sign a receipt. The thought of this honest act moves him to tears every time he tells the story, and he carries the receipt about with him wherever he goes.

"When I die," he says, "I wish it to be buried with me . . . and when my evil angel has read the list of my evil deeds and my good angel is about to read the list of my good acts I shall say quietly: 'Stop! All I want to know is whether this receipt is in

¹ Houben, *Gespräche*, p. 663.

order. Is this the handwriting of Christian Heinrich Klotz ? ' Then a tiny angel will fly along and will say that he knows Klotz' handwriting quite well and he will tell the story of the remarkably honest deed I committed. The eternal, omniscient Creator, however, who knows all things, will remember this story and he will praise me in the presence of sun, moon, and stars ; he will immediately calculate in his head that if my evil deeds are deducted from my 50,000 Mk. worth of honesty there remains a balance in my favour and he will say : ' Hirsch ! I appoint you an angel of the first class and you may wear wings with red and white feathers. ' "

Evidently the big German tom-cat has moments when basking, perhaps in the sun of physical well-being, he contents himself with purring softly and, withdrawing his terrible claws, he paws his victim so gently and almost affectionately that the superficial reader might very well be taken in as to the true nature of the animal. A particularly instructive instance of this may be found in the First Book of *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*. Heine had just been telling his readers that the result of the evangelical form of Christianity as introduced by Luther was the rationalization of religion, and the consequence of the rapid strides made by natural science in modern times was the cessation of miracles.

" Whether it be," he continues, " that God is peeved when the physicists watch his fingers suspiciously or that he has no intention of competing with Bosco, the conjurer, he has, even now that religion is in such peril, disdained to bolster it up with any astounding miracle. Perhaps from now on he will no longer condescend to perform his sacred tricks in any of the new religions he introduces on earth, preferring to demonstrate their truth by reason rather, indeed the most sensible thing to do. At least in Saint-Simonism, which is the latest of our religions, no miracle has ever yet occurred except, perhaps, that an old tailor's bill, which Saint-Simon had left unpaid on earth, was paid in cash by his disciples ten years after his death. I can still see the excellent Père Olinde rising full of enthusiasm in the Salle Taitbout and flaunting the receipted bill before the eyes of the astonished congregation. Young grocers' clerks were startled by such

supernatural testimony, the tailors, however, were already beginning to believe."

It is interesting to see how, after the sarcastic introductory passage on the cessation of miracles, of which we have quoted only the least irreverent portion, Heine most obviously withdraws his claws as soon as he touches on Saint-Simonism. That in private conversation with friends he should be a little less reserved and should hold the reins of his wit a little less tightly is natural enough. But even a talk with Laube,¹ full of jeering references to the Saint-Simonian ceremonial, ends with the declaration that he was opposed to the introduction of Saint-Simonism, as in that case he would no longer know what to write about. "What could be the subject of my sallies or of my poems," he asked, "when once we really have everything I have ever wished for or missed? The introduction and carrying into effect of Saint-Simonism would inevitably mean that I should be pensioned."

The explanation of this restraint is that he always kept a warm corner of his heart for the memories of this movement and its leaders. The egocentric Heine, whose heart had during the brief period of his Saint-Simonian rapture learned to beat in unison with the heart of the whole of humanity, finds it impossible to write harsh things even about the fantastic aspects of the movement, its leaders, that mixture of sanity and ecstatic nonsense, Père Enfantin, and his ill-balanced disciples.

Heine was never lavish in conferring the privilege of immunity from the shafts of his wit even on his closest friends, nor was he over-fastidious in the choice of his means of expression. The effort it must have cost him to restrain the most irrepressible of his faculties may therefore be taken as a measure of his respect for the only form of religion to which he ever adhered with any degree of conviction.

¹ Houben, *Gespräche*.

XXXII

CONCLUSION

WE have already disclaimed all desire to assign Heine a definite place in an imaginary hierarchy of literary merit. He is so obviously *sui generis* that he discourages, or ought to discourage, all comparison. We must content ourselves with stating that, tested by a whole century's experience and by the unremitting universality of his appeal, his work represents one of the lasting achievements, not only of German but of European literature, a distinction Heine shares with only one other German poet, namely, Goethe.

The greatness of Heine's work appears even more striking when we consider how much in what he accomplished Heine owed to himself, and how little to his environment or to good fortune. His earliest surroundings were Jewish, the linguistic atmosphere of his earlier years a mixture of Yiddish, French, and Rhenish German, and his letters of the first Hamburg period show ample traces of both Yiddish and Rhenish influence. His linguistic environment becomes more favourable from 1819, when he begins his studies in Bonn, and it continues so until he migrates to Paris twelve years later, when he marries a French woman who does not speak a word of German, has only French friends, and during twenty-five years creates an exclusively French atmosphere within the household which the ever diminishing number of German visitors can do little to counteract. In spite of such handicaps Heine's mastery of German is wellnigh perfect in both prose and verse, his delicate sense of the finest shades of meaning, of the musical and significant values of sounds, of the possibilities of the cadence of the German period, is astonish-

ing, and an inexhaustible source of pleasure to the reader. Writing during the most productive period of his life in antagonistic linguistic surroundings he plays a mighty part in regenerating German prose, freeing German verse from its classical shackles, and restoring to it some of its original native freedom of rhythm.

He is acknowledged to be one of the world's great love-poets, yet few love-poets have had less experience of the rapture of being loved. He never touched Amalie's heart. The love of the frigid Mathilde, the "grisette rangée," probably never rose to a higher plane than that of anyone of the *Verschiedene*, except for Mathilde's grim determination never to let go, and while his own love for La Mouche was not wanting in passionate ardour it is very doubtful whether, considering the circumstances of the case, La Mouche could possibly return anything more than a love that was nine-tenths pity. Throughout his life Heine inspired interest and admiration, but never love.

Fortunately Heine was, especially as compared with Goethe, abnormally independent of actual experience, the merest speck of it seemed to possess enormous suggestive power, and whatever a grudging fate withheld from him his nervous organization and his imagination supplied without stint.

Speaking of the way Heine is regarded in Germany, M. Lichtenberger says: "On le lit, mais on le déteste." This, of course, means nothing more than that the Heine controversy which began a hundred years ago is still raging. The end is by no means in sight. Heine will always be disparaged by those who foolishly expect from a poet more than he can give them, more than his individuality. He will disappoint those who expect the poet to perform not only the functions of the artist but also those of the teacher, the prophet, and the messenger of God. His readers search in vain for that metaphysical touch which has gained for many an inferior artist an undeservedly high place in public esteem.

No doubt such irrational critical attitude towards

the poet will always vitiate the public estimate of him, but the strongest reason why the judgment on Heine is likely to remain unsettled for many years to come is the fact that the politician Heine, with all his superficiality and the evanescent features of his method of exposition, has remained astonishingly modern. Though his political polemics are concerned in the first place with the political situation in his own time, the fundamental questions involved are precisely the same nowadays. The question of individual liberty is as hotly debated and as unsettled now as it was then. More and more is the world ranging itself into two camps, the champions of a narrow nationalism and those of a federation of nations based on principles of justice and equal rights. Heine, the protagonist of individual liberty and the deadly foe of all chauvinistic patriotism, still stands right in the midst of these controversies, and is apt to be judged from the standpoint of one party or another. As politician and poet are with him inseparably connected, the poet is often made to suffer for the sins of the politician, and we have to be thankful whenever to these two clouding factors, the introduction of political criteria and the irrational interpretation of the function of the artist, there is not added a third, the impenetrable fog of racial prejudice.

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